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IT'S YOUR SOULS WE WANT



# IT'S YOUR SOULS WE WANT

*by*

Stewart W. Herman, Jr.



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HARPER & BROTHERS *Publishers*  
New York *and* London

IT'S YOUR SOULS WE WANT

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FIRST EDITION

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To the Confessional Church of Germany  
whose pastors and people have borne  
the heat of the day.

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## *Introduction*

THERE could be no better introduction to this book than an account of my introduction to the Nazi capital. On February 22, 1936, Dr. Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl, temperamental Foreign Press Chief of the NSDAP (Nazi party) and David to Hitler's Saul, celebrated George Washington's birthday by giving a luncheon in his Pariser Platz apartment in honor of Ambassador William E. Dodd. No one who was present suspected that it was destined to be Putzi's last Washington Day luncheon. The following year the invitations which he sent out were abruptly recalled and the next thing we heard was that our prospective host had decamped and refused to obey his Fuehrer's summons to return to German soil. Hanfstaengl preceded Hess to England by a good five years and, as in the case of his more eminent emulator, the whole story has not yet been told.

In any event, that last luncheon is indelibly impressed upon my memory because it marked my introduction not only to public life in the capital of the Third Reich but to the uses to which the Nazi regime wished to put Christianity. The morning after my arrival in the city—two days before the luncheon—I was called to the telephone at the Hegel Haus where I was stopping and was confronted with a well-timbred feminine voice.

"Are you the new clergyman at the American Church?"

"Yes."

"This is Frau von Hausberger, Dr. Hanfstaengl's private secretary. He is giving a luncheon for Ambassador Dodd on George Washington's birthday. It is to be a formal occasion with many prominent people. As George Washington was a devout man as well as a great man, Dr. Hanfstaengl feels that your presence would impart the proper atmosphere and he would like you, as clergyman of the American Church in Berlin, to say grace. Could you come?"

I replied that I could and would. The evident "staging" of the affair didn't please me, but I was totally new to the official life of the capital and was willing to try everything at least once, and I made a mental note to put everything I had into the prayer I was to offer.

Fifteen minutes later came a second call from Frau von Hausberger who wanted to ascertain whether I would be appropriately dressed for the photographers who were to take pictures of the guests. Would I wear a robe? I assured her that that would be altogether out of place. Then, she said, I must wear a clerical collar. I told her that I didn't have one. She was greatly distressed. The military would be there in uniform and I ought to be dressed up too. I did not tell her that I had come to Germany to study and that when the call came to be pastor of the American Church I had had to send to America for my "ministerial clothes." She would have been genuinely alarmed if she had been able to look into my wardrobe. However, her attitude in this matter irritated me, perhaps unreasonably, and I curtly replied that I felt I knew what American ministers would wear on such an occasion. Sensing my rising exasperation, she apologized and hung up.

Resisting the temptation to appear in a blue serge suit, I rented some striped trousers and a morning coat, and at the appointed hour I appeared. Mountainous Dr. Hanfstaengl cocked his head critically, in the midst of his affable welcome, and it was plain to see that he was fairly well satisfied with my appearance. While pinning a white carnation to my lapel he nevertheless expressed his sorrow that I had not worn a "collar."

Among his carefully hand-picked guests were prominent Germans who still retained a modicum or more of friendly feeling for the United States: Prince Louis Ferdinand, Dr. Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht, State Secretaries Meissner and Lammers, Dr. Hugo Eckener of Zeppelin fame, and Dr. Dorpmueller, head of the German Railways. Among the Americans were Frank Lee of the embassy, Military Attaché Truman Smith, E. G. Kuhlman of Chase National Bank, and Louis Lochner of The Associated Press. Everyone looked

somewhat startled when it was announced that grace would be said. Apparently they were more startled at the nature of that little prayer, which obtained a temporary niche in history when Louis Lochner sent an account of it to New York as the first Christian prayer offered at an official Nazi function. It was probably the last. Putzi, who must have been peeking, leaned over to whisper in my ear that poker-faced, schoolteacherish Dr. Schacht "turned white" during the course of those brief petitions, but I can't say honestly that I observed much change in his pale poker face. Of course, no mention of the prayer appeared in the German press, although big accounts of the event were printed in next day's papers. The luncheon was stage-managed throughout, from the prayer to the chocolate layer cake with Washington's name and candles on it, from the Virginia cheroots (made in Austria) to our host's speech in which he subtly compared Hitler to Washington by indicating that both of these "fathers of their countries" had been born in the south of their respective nations.

That was only the beginning of a series of personal experiences which covered six full years of residence in Germany and gave me some unusual insights into religion as it is practiced in the Third Reich. As minister at the American Church my position was both anomalous and advantageous. Owing to the fact that the United States owns no state-church, American pastors stationed abroad have no official status, but, as there still is a very close relationship between church and state in Germany, the pastor of the American Church in Berlin was usually given a position on a plane with the clergy of all other foreign congregations—British, Swedish, Dutch, and so on—who were chaplains of their respective diplomatic missions. Whereas, however, these other pastors bore an additional burden of responsibility as ecclesiastical representatives of their governments, the American parson was bound only by his personal sense of responsibility toward his own embassy and the government whose guest he was. In short, he did not enjoy diplomatic immunity, which under certain conditions has decided advantages, but on the other hand he

was not in any sense restricted by the octuple embrace of awesome protocol.

Thus, a semiofficial apology was tendered me through the Propaganda Ministry when, one month after the Hanfstaengl luncheon, I was assaulted by an overenthusiastic Nazi for not giving the Hitler salute during a moment of nation-wide silence prior to an election speech by the Fuehrer who was standing on a locomotive in a factory on the other side of the country a few weeks after his new army had marched into the Rhineland. The search for my assailant lasted, I was told, for nine months and ended in failure to locate him, but it was not a diplomatic incident in any sense of the word albeit the American correspondents in Berlin were quick to see its news value. Again there was no mention of the affair in the German press which made and makes a practice of disregarding all disturbing or disagreeable events except for the railroad wrecks, airplane crashes, mine disasters, floods, and murders which happen only in *other* countries.

In the second year of the war, however, when I was arrested along with a number of other Americans in retaliation, apparently, for the arrest of German newspapermen in the United States, my immediate release was effected not because I was the American pastor but because I had become a full-fledged member of the embassy staff by that time. Consequently our chargé lodged a formal protest with the Foreign Office and the Foreign Office immediately responded with a formal apology for having overstepped the bounds of diplomatic courtesy. As American pastor I would, presumably, have been detained indefinitely or been released without explanation, but as an embassy "clerk" my status was considerably more secure.

My position as pastor, and that of my immediate predecessors, was a far cry from the old days when real prestige and ponderous dignity attached to the ministerial office. In the time of the Kaiser, for example, American clergymen in Berlin were welcome figures at court and prominent in the superrespectable, highly intellectual, and somewhat stodgy, social life of the German capital. The intervening quarter of a century had brought tremendous changes in the train of a

war from which the American colony and the American Church—like the German nation and the German Church—never fully recovered. The indifferent attitude of the Republic, which was struggling desperately to maintain itself in the wreckage of fiscal and social debris, was replaced by the evident hostility of the Nazi government which was interested only in agencies and individuals who would lend themselves to propaganda purposes. Thereafter—that is, from 1933 on—there seemed to be very little that an American pastor could do except to nourish as assiduously as possible the flame of Christian faith in a harried and unstable American community so that our small church would be to its own members, and perhaps to the Germans who, directly or indirectly, came into contact with it, a reminder, however modest, of an unbreakable faith in the supernatural power of Christian love and brotherhood.

That may sound like a full-time job and, of course, it was. I should like to go on to a discussion of the very important work that American pastors in churches abroad—not as missionaries, but merely as ministers to our own fellow countrymen—could do, especially in conjunction with a program of cultural relationships fostered by the State Department; but obviously that sort of talk is hardly in place here. Nevertheless it falls within the scope of my observations, as a Christian minister, to say that any nation which presumes to defend by word or deed those Christian principles which another nation patently denies ought to be doubly careful that it practices what it preaches, especially in its diplomatic, commercial, and journalistic embassies. It is from this humble viewpoint, rather than out of any feeling of self-righteousness, that this story of the religious developments in Germany has been written.

I thoroughly enjoyed my contacts with all the Americans resident in Berlin and the primary concern of our Church Council was to achieve an exemplary congregational life without involving ourselves either in internal political affairs or in German Church matters. This was not always easy. Of course, I sought to understand the significance of all that was

happening, but it was never my intention to concentrate upon any aspect of the Third Reich with a view to adding another volume to the considerable library which Hitler has already inspired. It was the dull prolongation of our internment at Bad Nauheim last spring which drove us all to invent new ways of exploiting our unaccustomed inactivity . . . and caused me, in desperation, to marshal my material on the "church situation" wherein was to be found, I felt sure, the indispensable yardstick for measuring the stature of Nazism in the past, present, and future. It is amazing what a large cud of information we had for our chewing in the sudden leisure which succeeded our crowded Berlin days, and what a wealth of unsuspected patterns many seemingly unrelated events revealed when placed in juxtaposition.

Many more volumes will have to be written before the spiritual history of the New Germany will fall into definitive form. Meanwhile this book may serve to provide a factual basis and a few of the most essential insights which are needed for a more adequate understanding of the one great unanswered question which will undoubtedly determine the future of the German people for centuries to come: *in whom shall we put our faith?* Reduced to its lowest common denominator, this question is, *Christ or Hitler?* Blasphemous though it may sound to reverent ears, and incredible as it may sound to ears that are not so reverent, that is the issue. Whether it may be inferred from this that the present war is a holy crusade is a matter that must be decided between the reverent and the irreverent. One thing seems certain: if Hitler has not been able to knock Christianity out of his people by the force of a militant faith it seems very unlikely that Hitlerism can be knocked out of the Nazis by a sound thrashing administered by people of little or no faith. The issue of the present war, as yet virtually unexpressed, goes far beyond military, economic, and political considerations. Our world, owing to the various eighteenth and nineteenth-century revolutions in modern thought, had lost most of its faith in the institutions and standards upon which our civilization was built. That is a hackneyed statement which may tempt many readers to

slam this book shut and pitch it into a corner, because they have become tired of listening to clergymen—and others—mouth those words without being able to conjure up the fire of a new faith out of the dead ashes or cooling embers of the old, but it still poses an unsolved problem.

What is this problem? It is, essentially, the necessity of finding an adequate receptacle for the vast faith which modern man, in spite of his proud knowledge, still feels he has to deposit in some vital object outside and above himself.

Germany, owing to its terrible defeat in the last war, was especially persistent in its search for a new *raison d'être*—literally, a reason for living—and, without entering into the validity of National Socialist doctrine, I want to call attention to the fact that millions of Germans seized upon Hitler's dogmatic assertions as a facile philosophy of life which contained all the answers, at least to the immediate questions of existence. It was inevitable that they should proceed, consciously or unconsciously, to look upon this new Leader as a messiah worthy of their fullest faith. As for him, he knew that real action springs not so much from intellectual conviction as from emotional excitement, of the power of which he himself is an outstanding exponent.

Therefore the story that I have to tell is not being written with doleful shakings of the head and an "Isn't-it-awful, Agnes?" tone of voice, nor is the reader supposed to "tsk, tsk" as he turns its pages; for I dare say that most Americans are searching for a receptacle for their faith too and we shall count ourselves fortunate if we return from materialism via humanism to a full faith in God without making the kind of detour which the Nazis have taken. Of course, our spiritual and political history is different from that of Germany but it cannot, I think, be said that our national philosophy has as yet finished with certain racial and social—yes, I mean "blood and soil"—issues, the right answers to which are an indispensable prerequisite of a new World Order. What has been happening to the religious life of the German nation is worthy not only of a superficial commiseration on our part but of the closest scrutiny. Germany had as much right as the United States,



perhaps more, to be called a Christian nation upon the basis of ecclesiastical organization and national piety. Something went wrong somewhere, and if we fail to look for the source of the trouble under the shifting surface of events we shall have been guilty of the grossest moral and spiritual delinquency in connection with the planning of a just and durable peace.

A comprehending diagnosis of the fundamental spiritual issue is particularly essential to the re-education of the Hitler Youth. For the moment their faith is actually an overwhelming enthusiasm rather than a deep, abiding trust capable of weathering the worst storms of an adverse fate, but it will take more than lukewarm loyalty to old religious standards to make them forget the picturesque chivalrics of Nazism.

The American Church in Berlin is located in the very heart of the German capital. Every Sunday morning I could hear the bells of all the surrounding steeples ringing out at church time. And almost every Sunday morning when the bells were inviting people to service I would hear the sound of tramping feet and singing voices marching down the converging streets into the near-by square. When I went to the window, as I often did, to see what was going on, the same scene always met my eyes. Columns of boys in brown shirts and dark-blue shorts—ski pants in winter—with heavy boots on their feet were parading along under banners and flags. They marched three abreast just like the regular infantry and they tried to take long steps like the soldiers they wished to imitate.

They were not marching to church, as they frequently used to do before Hitler came to power. These were the Hitler boys and they were going into the movie theatre just across the street to practice singing their songs of hatred and war and to be exhorted once more that to live and die for Germany—the greatest nation on earth—is the noblest aim in life. Other nations, they were informed, were trying to destroy the Fatherland but the Fuehrer had rescued the country just in the nick of time. Now they must grow up to be hard men of iron in order to help him give Germany her place in the sun.

It remains to be seen whether the faith confessed by

thousands of boys before the Christian altars of Germany or the faith professed by tens of thousands of enthusiastic youngsters in oaths of fidelity to Hitler will prove stronger. There is no longer any doubt that these two faiths exist and that one of them must be destroyed if the other is to exist. Both of them have deep roots in German history but heretofore "Germanism" has never seriously disputed the place of Christianity. Today the "German Faith" movements, not Christianity, represent the true creed of the Nazi regime. Paganism comes naturally to the SS Elite Guard to whom Christian precepts are utterly uncongenial.

The attitude of the younger soldiers was graphically illustrated for the benefit of our embassy and newspaper group at Bad Nauheim one Sunday morning as we were having our church service in the lounge of the Grand Hotel. At one end of the room were some broad steps leading into the dining room and a large landing formed a natural "chancel" where I was accustomed to stand. We had had several interruptions on previous occasions when hotel servants inadvertently used a door leading in from one side of the platform. Finally we put up a notice in German and English outside the door requesting that there be no disturbance of the service which was in progress. There were other doors communicating with the rest of the hotel. On this particular morning, however, the door was opened brusquely and a soldier in full uniform clumped into the "chancel." Without showing any signs of embarrassment and without bothering to remove his cap he marched across the platform and down the steps through the congregation which sat in stunned and angry silence until he had left the room. When a protest was made after the service at the hotel office, the manager could only say, "That is the new generation; what can one expect?"

Things had changed mightily between the time of my arrival in Berlin as American pastor and this departure, six years later, as a diplomatic hostage. Without injecting too much personal history into the account, I have tried to write a record of what happened to religion under Hitler in that time.



PART I

The New State Religion



## CHAPTER I

### *It's Your Souls We Want*

BEFORE war broke in September, 1939, it was generally acknowledged, even by Nazi leaders, that within Germany National Socialism still had one more world to conquer, namely, the national soul. The feeling of failure is reflected in a little poem published in one of the Berlin newspapers that same year:

We have captured all the positions  
And on the heights we have planted  
The banners  
Of our revolution.

You had imagined  
That that was all  
That we wanted.

We want more.  
We want *all!*  
Your hearts are our goal,  
It is your souls we want!

There is, indeed, more truth than poetry in these lines. Briefly they reveal the ultimate aim of the Nazi program, at least so far as its demands upon the German people are concerned. Politically, economically, and socially the German nation quickly became the personal property of Adolf Hitler; but it is interesting to note that even party members have shown considerable reluctance in surrendering the last citadel of spiritual freedom to their Leader. Now a new religion is being forced upon them whether they like it or not. Hitler knows that if he does not succeed in winning everything, he stands to lose everything. That is the weakness of totalitarianism.

Very little thought had been given to the religious aspect

of national life in the early days of the Nazi movement. It was assumed that the German Church as a national institution would automatically be included in the general renaissance that was being carefully planned. Like the universities, labor unions, private industry, cultural life, and the press, religion too would find its place and fulfill its function in the totalitarian scheme. It is evident that Hitler had at one time contemplated the establishment of a new religion, but it is just as evident that no serious thought was given to the subject. In one of *Mein Kampf's* few references to religion, the author says, "For the politician the estimation of the value of a religion must be decided less by the deficiencies which it perhaps shows than by the presence of a visibly better substitute. As long as there is no apparent substitute, that which is present can be demolished only by fools or by criminals."<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the "visibly better substitute" for religion might have been, it is evident that Hitler did not have it. There must have been many times in recent years when he wished that an ersatz religion would be discovered, for of all national institutions and agencies the church is the sole stubborn citadel still holding out against the encroachments of the regime. Why hasn't it been smashed? The answer probably lies in the fact that 95 per cent of all Germans still retain their membership in the church, whether it means anything to them or not, and radical suppression or violent reformation of it might have a disastrous effect upon public morale and even lead eventually to civil war. So, the church has not been smashed but it has been given up as a bad job by the radical elements of the Nazi party, although Hitler still seems to cherish a glimmer of hope that he will capture the church intact. In the meantime the search for a substitute is not discouraged and the more mystical fanatics are bent upon exploiting the opportunity to get rid of Christianity altogether. Hitler himself appears to have entered into the religious experiments that are now being made.

Even before the effort at "co-ordination" failed there were fanatics within the Nazi movement, like Ludendorff, who had

<sup>1</sup> *Mein Kampf*, p. 366. Reynal & Hitchcock, Inc.

openly advocated a return to ancient Germanic forms of faith and visionaries like Alfred Rosenberg, the official philosopher of the Third Reich, who were bent on concocting a new creed based on mystical ties of blood and soil. Although the government granted these cults full freedom in the name of religious liberty and even kept an eye on them to see whether one of them might not catch popular fancy, the results, when compared with the spectacular successes to which the Nazis are accustomed, were disappointing. Thus the party has virtually been forced to abandon the likeliest candidates for the post of "official religion" superseding the state-church.

It is a curious fact that there are still more Germans who believe in God than there are Nazis who believe in Hitler—or in Hitler's God. I have often wondered whether Hitler has ever stopped a moment to think about that. Despite all his efforts to make their religion his own affair, the German people still take Hitler at his word and consider their religion a personal matter. They know that freedom of religion will not last very long if the Nazis decide that it is harmful to the State, but they are holding on to it as long as they can. It is the only thing they have left.

The last official census giving religious statistics was taken in 1939 just before the outbreak of war. Including Austria and the Sudetenland there were then about 79,400,000 people in Grossdeutschland. Of these only 1,200,000 (1.5 per cent) classified themselves as atheists. That leaves 98.5 per cent who commit themselves to faith in God. Except in the case of the Austrian and Sudeten plebiscites Hitler with all his electioneering has never come out of a popular referendum with so large a majority.

The atheists may immediately be discounted as exercising any perceptible influence on German religious thought today. Whereas these "freethinkers" played a sensational role in Germany from 1900 to 1933 and helped to raise the numbers of people resigning from the church from about 2,000 a year in 1900 to more than 300,000 a year in 1920, their influence declined gradually in the days of the Republic and has been suppressed completely by the new regime which places "god-



lessness" in the same category with anarchistic Bolshevism. As a matter of fact, the number of out-and-out atheists has remained practically static since 1925.

From a purely negative point of view the history of atheism in Germany provides an illuminating commentary on the place which religion occupies in the private and public life of the Germans. Even though indifferent to the church, the ordinary German has always disliked and distrusted people who renounce all faith in God. Church membership became a badge of social stability and responsibility; in fact, in the eighteenth century it was made a requirement for election or appointment to public office. Until the ratification of the Weimar Constitution in 1919 any person who resigned from the church was, therefore, at a serious social and political disadvantage, which explains in part the great increase of resignations in the postwar years. On the other hand, this public repudiation of the church was also an expression of disappointment in the church rather than in Christianity; and many who had precipitately left the church began to return to it after the "Red" scare of the early Twenties because it filled, however inadequately, their need for spiritual support.

Hitler who started his career at that time used sound political common sense in putting his program ostensibly on a religious basis, and everything might have run smoothly if conscientious Christians had not discovered, after he came to power, that his real intention was to put religion on a political basis. Religion from then on assumed an importance which the Hitlerian revolution never intended it to have. There were, of course, certain Germans who took no offense at this reversal of values because it created for them a new position between the unsatisfactory old religion and religion's only alternative, namely, atheism, but most Germans were unprepared to receive a new spiritual order.

According to the 1939 census only 2,700,000 (3.5 per cent) people registered themselves in the brand-new category of "God-believers" (Gottgläubig), that is, as persons who believed in God but did not belong to church. Not all of

them, by any means, could be claimed as the recruits of religious Nazism. There had always been certain people, as stated before, who were disgruntled with the church but would not go so far as to call themselves atheists in order to get out of it. Others, including members of small "free churches," had taken this means of avoiding church taxes which are required of all those who call themselves Christian, except for the adherents of certain recognized historical "sects" like the Mennonites, Baptists, Methodists and Evangelicals. And, finally, there were the SS Elite Guard who were required to resign from the church and sign up as "God-believers" even though they might still have a warm spot in their hearts for their traditional faith or, as in most cases, be utterly devoid of any faith at all.

The official analysts of the census proudly point out that the two non-Christian categories increased by 41.9 percent since 1933. While not so great as the radical Nazis would like to see it, this increase nonetheless arouses the anxiety of German churchmen who are painfully aware that the ties binding many millions of Germans to the church are woefully weak. Every strong wind of agitation brings down thousands of these dry leaves. In 1925 the percentage of people outside the church was only 2.2, by 1933 it had risen to 2.4, and by 1939 it had jumped to 5.<sup>2</sup> This rate of increase, however, is not rapid enough to satisfy the Nazis who are very sensitive to the fact that they are working against time and that they can never expect to obtain the wholehearted support of the church. Hitler has repeatedly referred, in one way or another, to the compulsion of haste under which he is laboring to establish a thousand-year Reich in his lifetime. This new Reich has no religious substance as yet, especially since the Christian clergy have failed to give him that unanimous support which he, from his contacts with the German Christian party, had been led to expect. Yet, most of his Nazis

<sup>2</sup> Over the same period the German population increased from 62,410,000 to 65,000,000 to 79,400,000, but it is unlikely that the percentages are greatly affected thereby.

are still nominally Christian. The situation obviously calls for very special treatment.

Conscious of their failure to co-ordinate the church or to separate the people from it at a blow, Nazi leaders have proceeded to introduce into the national life a spiritual ersatz, not by sponsoring openly some fully developed pagan religion, but by letting a new form of worship take gradual root in the community. By instituting some new, and fostering some old, ceremonies, holidays, and anniversaries, it has been possible to instil a mystical significance into these special occasions on which the spotlight of public attention is centered. Under Goebbels's skillful manipulations political celebrations are turning into solemn festivals and the solemn festivals to quasi-religious services. The final goal is a full-dress substitute for Christianity. It has taken time to develop the proper technique, but the Nazi enthusiasts have come a long way since the days of the first national Harvest Home meetings on the Bueckeberg in Westphalia and the clumsy "revivalism" of the early Party Congresses at Nuremberg.

Indeed, if it had not been for the war this almost imperceptible replacement of Christianity by a political myth might have continued indefinitely and eventually have proved successful owing to the total suppression of resistance and the increasing difficulty of giving a Christian education to the youth. But now because of the war it is doubtful that the dream of supplanting the church by degrees will ever come true. The keenly felt catastrophe of another World War, following so closely on the heels of the last, had the effect of sobering the German people and placing them under spiritual pressures which gradually evoked a hunger for the substantial bread of a real religion rather than the inadequate cake of political ideology. The party was as prompt as the church to recognize this need and try to satisfy it.

In Germany it was an accepted fact that Hitler went to war without the whole-hearted blessing of the church despite the

fact that the nation had been so highly organized that not a man, woman or child could avoid throwing his full weight behind the war effort. Although every atom of strength in the nation had long since been conscripted for war service, the Nazis were left under no illusions regarding the inability and unwillingness of the state-church to provide full spiritual support for the venture. On the eve of conflict Hitler could not, for several reasons, recommend to the people who gathered below his balcony in the Wilhelmplatz, "*Gehet nach Hause und betet!*" (Go home and pray!), as the Kaiser had done after addressing a similar crowd below his palace window in the Lustgarten twenty-five years earlier. Consequently, spiritual support had to be dispensed with altogether or sought elsewhere.

For the first two years, as a consequence of the relatively easy victories over Poland, Norway, the Netherlands, and France, the German armies did not appear to have much need of spiritual support. The prodigies performed by panzer units rendered prayer superfluous. So far as the average German understood those campaigns, there had been practically no casualties at all. In the newsreels not a German plane was seen to fall, not a German tank was seen to go up in flames, not a soldier lay dead on the roads or in the fields. A rumor had been heard to the effect that the first young Germans struck down in Poland, who were wandering around in a spiritual no man's land between Christian faith and Hitlerian idolatry, did not know "how to die." But that was a rumor and nothing more was heard of it. Confidence in their weapons, in their overwhelming weight, and in their officers took the place of faith among the ordinary soldiers who were taught to obey and not to think.

The Russian campaign changed all that both at home and at the front. Germans at the front began to *die*. Germans at home who had been led from one campaign to another with the feeling that war would not last much longer felt their hearts grow cold with apprehension. There was another effort on the part of party and church to meet this

new spiritual crisis, and the party increased its exertions to undermine and incapacitate the church altogether.

A tangible illustration of what was happening on the spiritual front is provided by the funeral problem. An increasing number of fatalities, particularly among higher officers and the SS Elite, made it necessary to reach some decision about a suitable burial ceremony. Church services were out of the question and yet the new heroes could not be interred without a formula of farewell. Equally disturbing to the morale of the Nazi was the thought of being lost in the echoless void on the Russian side of the lines from which no word regarding prisoners of war has ever come back. In short, death became real . . . but what of God?

In order to silence this insistent question a new type of service was evolved which was variously called a *Staatsakt*, *Staatsfeier*, *Feierstunde*, or *Weihestunde*. It dispenses with much of the usual ritual of Christian or previous pagan rites. It is not confined to the funerals of the great but is becoming increasingly popular for all occasions of national or regional significance. It makes use not only of the brand-new Hitlerian holidays, such as the nation-wide Confirmation Day of the Hitler Youth, but also of the pre-Nazi festivals, like Memorial Day, which have now been streamlined to fit in with the newer philosophy.

Thus, at the present time, there are two types of worship—one Christian, the other Nazi—locked in a death struggle in the Third Reich. Both of them are confident of final victory in the battle for the German soul. More than the military war is at stake. The scene is not unlike that of the prophet Elijah competing with the four hundred prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel for rain from heaven in a time of drought.

The new priesthood, at present consisting largely of the more fervid party functionaries, looks to a special agency called the *Kulturamt* for guidance in the matter of arranging services. This office, which might be entitled "Bureau for Cultural and Spiritual Affairs," exists throughout all the subdivisions of the party and the Hitler Youth but has

not, as yet, been given official government status, which, of course, would be of no practical significance in a country where the party is the State and the State is the party. Theoretically, however, the arrangement is interesting because, while the party has its *Kulturamt* which is devoted to the spiritual needs of the nation, the State supports the Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs which was established in order to bring the churches into line. This is the only instance, in the Third Reich, so far as I know, where the party and State organizations do not duplicate each other. The party has no Department for Ecclesiastical Affairs and the State has no *Kulturamt*!

Nevertheless long strides have already been made toward the establishment of a new religion of the Hitlerian State. As the new rites are being skillfully inserted into the fabric of national life, there are already signs of the emergence of a guild of professional "arrangers of ceremonies" who have mastered the finer points of conducting services. Their one aim is to glorify the New Germany and especially Adolf Hitler. Deliberately they are setting out to produce that sensation which a little boy described to his father when the youngster was trying to express his feelings about the relative status of the old and new faiths in his own heart. "Adolf Hitler," he said, "has become so big, and Jesus Christ has become so small."

How does Hitler make himself so big? It has not been accomplished merely by requiring all restaurants, offices, and shops to give his picture a prominent place on the wall, nor by clearing out show windows on his birthday to make room for a shrine containing his bust wrapped in a swastika flag and surrounded with candles and flowers. That is old stuff in Europe. On the contrary, it is done by subjecting all Germans to constant indoctrination leading up to what amounts to actual worship. It is quite true, for example, that in many private and public homes the brief prayer of thanksgiving preceding the meal is addressed to the Fuehrer.

Back in May, 1936, when Alfred Rosenberg solemnly dedicated a Kulturhalle in Hersfeld in North Germany in the presence of the political leaders of the district, he described the rise and fall of the Germanic gods, the rise and fall of medieval Christianity, and finally the rise of National Socialism, closing with this comment about the new era: "We lacked a great, leading world view, but this was born to us in a blessed hour in National Socialism. The millions have found in National Socialism their new tranquillity and their spiritual homeland."

All over Germany regular Sunday services are now being held under party auspices in rooms or "culture halls" which are set aside or utilized for special Nazi celebrations. When monthly services of this type were first inaugurated in the district of Marienburg and Stuhm, Local Leader Dittman delivered a discourse in which he spoke of the difference between a leader and a dictator, taking for his text a paragraph from *Mein Kampf* which had just been read. "A leader," he said, "is never trained, but is born as the conscious executor of a divine commission. We must revere the executor of the eternal will. One thing we must not forget: Through the Leader speaks God. Let us express our reverence for this greatest of all Germans by taking our work seriously. We must be firm in faith, strong in will, and as humble as our great Leader."

On a visit to Munich one Sunday morning in the spring of 1940 I attended a special "Heroes' Memorial Day" rite as it is now celebrated in the New Reich. The "service" was held in the Hercules Hall of the old royal Residenz, palace of the Bavarian Wittelsbachs, opposite the street entrance of which now stands a perpetual guard of honor over the spot by the Feldherrnhalle where Hitler's Putsch of 1923 failed and sixteen members of the party were killed. The last time I had visited Munich some of the lower rooms of the palace, home of the mad Ludwigs, housed an anti-Semitic exposition.

Paying 80 *pfennige* (about 30 cents) for a ticket which bore a "Strength through Joy" inscription, I checked my

hat and coat and went into the hall—rather a modest one in comparison with many other apartments in the spacious palace—and found it about half full. An orchestra dressed in brown uniforms with red armbands was tuning up on a platform at the far end of the auditorium. Behind the orchestra stood potted evergreen trees and above the trees hung swastika banners, the inevitable props of every Nazi affair. Two lecterns, as in a Christian Science church, were placed in front of the orchestra, somewhat to either side, and they too were embellished with the swastika and evergreen. After the orchestral prelude two readers took their places at the lecterns and remained there throughout the service.

Promptly at 10:30 the memorialization of heroes began with the first movement of Beethoven's Eighth symphony. Then came a poem in honor of dead warriors, followed by "The Song of the Good Comrade" which in Germany is as traditional as the sounding of taps at a soldier's funeral. Following another reading, "We lower the flags," an appropriate passage from *Mein Kampf* was read. Then more music, more poetry, and even some prose suitable to the occasion. The memorialization of the dead was succeeded by a charge to the living in the form of a poetic dialogue in which the dead spoke from the grave. A final "testament" was not unlike a prayer. The service closed with the singing of the national anthems and a "benediction," namely, a threefold "Seig Heil" (Hail Victory!) which was called out by the speakers and echoed by the audience.

The reader will have no difficulty in perceiving that this order of service looks suspiciously like a Christian liturgy with its hymns, psalms, and scripture readings from the law and the prophets. Charging admission and checking hats and coats would seem to be the only "improvement" introduced by the Nazis in religious worship. Such improvements, however, betray not only a surprising lack of faith in Providence, but also of confidence in each other.

This, then, is the sort of substitute for Christian worship sponsored by the National Socialist party. Admittedly it is



not very impressive. Neither is the usual service of most small Christian congregations impressive. But let's go to the "cathedral." On Memorial Day, March 16, 1942, the Berlin Armory, which is a historical war museum next the Unknown Soldier Memorial on Unter den Linden, was the scene of a special observance at which Hitler spoke.

Promptly at noon on Sunday he entered the Armory's Court of Honor with his highest officers. The first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was played. Hitler spoke briefly and closed, as is his custom, with a sort of prayer: "May the Lord God grant us all the power that in the future we may also do what duty demands of us. With this plea we bow in reverence before the dead heroes and before their bereaved families and all other victims of this war." Then the national anthems were sung. Before going to lay a wreath at the Unknown Soldier Memorial, Hitler visited the latest acquisitions of the War Museum. Afterwards he greeted certain crippled veterans who were present and reviewed a parade of "honor flags" borne by an "honor battalion."

That same morning in the Schiller Theatre there had been a special service for boys and girls with a "sermon" by the chief of the Hitler Youth Kultursturm on a text very similar to "He who loseth his life shall find it," but the emphasis was of course on heroic death with not even the remotest reference to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Characteristic of special party festivals, as distinguished from national holidays of longer standing, is the Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Party Program, commemorating the first announcement of the Nazi Platform by Hitler on February 24, 1920, in the Hofbraeuhaus (Court Beer Cellar) at Munich. If the irreverence were not too crass, this day might almost be called the Feast of the Annunciation. Incidentally, a very popular and much reproduced painting depicting a shabby Hitler haranguing his original beer-hall audience takes its title from the first

verse of the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word!"

In 1942 the anniversary was celebrated throughout the Reich in a series of demonstrations organized under the auspices of the "Office of the Fuehrer's Commissioner for the supervision of the entire spiritual and philosophical discipline and education of the National Socialist German Workers' Party," meaning Rosenberg. At the main ceremony in Berlin, Alfred Rosenberg himself set the pace with an enthusiastically applauded discourse on "The Inner and Outer Liberty of the German."

Lengthy newspaper articles described the Kroll Opera House, where the meeting was held, as presenting a beautiful and worthy setting for the ceremony. The flood-lit stage was delicately ornamented with flowers, greenery, and the colorful uniforms of honor delegates bearing the banners of their various formations. The orchestra from the People's Opera played the "Festal Overture for a National Socialist Ceremony" by a Nazi composer. Then two poems of Dietrich Eckhardt—deceased Nazi poet laureate—"conjured up the picture of the former era of German impotence wherein, however, the poet prophetically and undeviatingly already foresaw the rise of our Folk." From the twelfth chapter of *Mein Kampf* were lifted certain passages bearing upon the promulgation of the party program. Preceding Rosenberg's "sermon" there was a short musical interlude selected from Brückner's Third Symphony.

Part of Rosenberg's address is of especial interest, that is, if you can understand him. After defining freedom in the life of the state as a "form" or "figure" revealed in a "frame" of "creative power" as opposed to "tyranny" and "arbitrariness," he goes on to say that the National Socialist movement, traveling via the political route, has arrived at the same objective aimed at by great religious leaders, philosophers, and poets of the German people. This means that Luther and Kant and Schiller were trying to say the same thing as Hitler but, not having Rosenberg to help them, they could not put their ideas across. The threefold

"Sieg Heill!" for the Fuehrer and the singing of the national anthems terminated the séance.

Other anniversaries which cannot be classified as being primarily Nazi are officially approved or summarily rejected on the basis of political expediency. The old holidays may be glorified or minimized according to the mood of the moment.

Charlemagne, for example, had been in the bad graces of the Nazi party for twenty years because, they say, he betrayed his German blood by surrendering the German people into the power of the Roman Church for the sake of a papal blessing and an imperial crown. Furthermore, he had slaughtered his Saxon cousins in a bloody battle because they refused to let themselves be baptized into the Christian faith. Therefore, the year 800 A.D. in which Charles the Great became emperor in Rome was described in Nazi schoolbooks as "the year of misfortune" (Unheilsjahr) and Charles was virtually disowned, in spite of the fact that he introduced the German language in the German pulpit.

But on April 2, 1942, the twelve hundredth anniversary of his birth was celebrated throughout Germany and all the occupied countries with special services in his honor. His old capital, Aix-la-Chapelle or Aachen, was the scene of great festivals. On that day all newspapers with one accord carried long front-page editorials which reinterpreted the slaughter of the Saxons and the Roman coronation in terms of the unification of the German tribes and the inauguration of a new order in Europe. Since the recent inauguration of Hitler's New Order in Europe, Charles has become "one of the greatest statesmen of world history."

"Many a person," said one editorial in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, "finds it offensive that Charles was a believing Christian his whole life long, and that many of his most important actions were executed not because of state necessity but to serve Christianity. He himself, like his contemporaries, never understood how to separate these two motive

forces. But in his relations with the Christian church the King and Kaiser was its protector, not its vassal."

The Nazi interpretation of European history is that the continental current of creative energy and strength flowed from north to south rather than from south to north. Certain new scholars have uncovered strong traces of Germanic influence in the earliest Mediterranean civilizations and seriously claim that the ancient Germans were primarily responsible for the golden age of Greece. It is no wonder then that Charlemagne is now extolled as the architect of a united Europe, and that the Nazis claim that, if his creative German visions had been realized, over a thousand years of war and bloodshed would have been avoided.

This latter note is struck for the benefit of a defeated France where editorials of similar tone were written, but without laying any stress on the fact that Charlemagne was a German. The French have always been taught that this hero of Christendom was a Frenchman. He was King of the Franks from whom the French derive their name. If it would help to draw the two nations together in the war effort for Hitler's New Europe, the Propaganda Ministry under Dr. Goebbels would soon supply both the Germans and the French with an airtight argument proving the ancestry of Charles the Great to the satisfaction of both peoples. If things go according to plan, he may even become the first saint in a new state religion of Europe. Napoleon with his combination of Italian and French blood—who took the crown from the pope's hand and placed it on his own head (the kind of gesture which the Nazis like!)—will be the second saint to be canonized. It is not inconceivable that these two men will become the forerunners of the true Savior of Europe, Adolf Hitler.

At the twelve hundredth birthday celebration in Aachen, Gauleiter Grohe clearly indicated the relative places of Charlemagne and Hitler, of *Religion* and *Politik* when he said, "After the centuries-long cessation of all church unity, this great personality of our time (Hitler) has given to his nation the basic spiritual unity and perceives in the nation

itself the sense and aim of all struggle and historic action."

But not all of the new Nazi worship is reserved for warriors and statesmen. Sometimes the occasions are entirely impersonal, as for example the special commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact in Berlin. Or, a Weltanschauliche Feierstunde (world-view festive hour) which may be celebrated at any time that the internal or external, local or national situation calls for it. The theme of a big Nazi pep meeting in Berlin under the direct supervision of Alfred Rosenberg on April 12, 1942,—the first Sunday after Easter—was "The Attitude of the German People in the Face of Destiny." The speaker was a Dr. Helmut Stellrecht, staff leader, who said that miracles are contrary to the natural order. Providence, he continued, wants no miracles and will tolerate none, but desires rather deeds which are done within the natural order. Therefore, he concluded, men who are wrestling with their destiny want no miracles either. The speech obviously was aimed in two directions: to discredit the Christian resurrection faith and to bolster the sagging morale of a people disappointed with the prolonged Russian campaign and disgruntled because of the third severe war winter.

Still other celebrations are less didactic and more pleasant. On Sunday, March 29, 1942, a nation-wide commemoration of the 115th anniversary of Beethoven's death was sponsored by the Nazi party, and the chief observance of the occasion took place in Berlin's huge barnlike Philharmonic Hall where Mendelssohn's medallion has been removed from the series of bas-reliefs of Germany's great musicians lining the walls. A maladroit speech was delivered by the Leader of the Chief Bureau of Propaganda in which he snarled at "foreign critics" who had tried to belittle Beethoven's heroic music and pointed out that the German soldier was fighting today for the preservation of heroism. "In the hours when we grow weak let us fetch new power from him," concluded the speaker. A popular movie star, Mathias Wieman, then read Beethoven's testament before the C Minor Symphony was played.

In the provinces there are constant ceremonies in honor of local poets and musicians. Unremitting emphasis is placed upon the "German blood," the "German mission," the "German outlook" of these artists who, in most instances, would have shuddered with terror if they had foreseen the Third Reich, even though many of them were, as is usually true of local poets in Germany, extremely nationalistic. These were the artists who glorified the Heimat (hometown) and gave to each province its peculiar flavor which fascinates every tourist who has ever visited Germany. With brush or pen they proudly maintained and strengthened the quaint customs and costumes of the district until the nation became a brilliant crazy quilt of local color. All this the Nazis have appropriated to themselves, identifying it with the Hitler Spirit, and slowly investing it with religious significance—the trappings of a religion of blood and soil.

As yet no new church has been proclaimed. The extent to which the new religion will be able to elbow the old church out of the picture depends, first, upon the spiritual vitality of the local pastor and his flock, secondly, upon the fanaticism of the party leader and his organization. The general policy of the party has been to press hardest at the point of least resistance and gradually isolate the centers of opposition in order to dissolve them one by one.

The inauguration of the new religious standard has proceeded more rapidly in the newly annexed territories where the church could most easily be prevented from regaining its old foothold in community life. This applies not only to the provinces carved out of Poland and the areas recaptured from France but also to the earlier additions of Austria and the Sudetenland to the Reich. In former Poland, for example, the outside connections of the local church have been severed completely. "Community Houses" (Gemeinschaftshaeuser) have been erected to provide a focal point for all district interests including the Nazi Sunday services which, like baptisms and marriages and funerals, take place in the Weiheraum (Consecrated room) adorned with the

sculptured or painted image of the Fuehrer. Every provincial party headquarters throughout the Reich now has such a "sanctuary" for pseudo-religious ceremonies. Although many meetings are still held in opera houses, beer halls, and sport arenas, these settings are no longer considered to be worthy of the solemn events which now transpire within them.

One of the projects announced in 1941 to keep the nation strong in its faith that the war would soon be over was Professor Albert Speer's plan for the erection of a brand-new city on the sandy shores of the Baltic Sea. Professor Speer is a young architect who gained prominence as the planner of the New Berlin and since then has been appointed as successor to Dr. Fritz Todt, builder of the West Wall and the Reich's Autobahn, who died in an airplane crash over Poland last winter.

The new city of sixteen thousand inhabitants is to have a main thoroughfare as broad and long as Berlin's Unter den Linden debouching in a great square large enough to contain the entire population. This square will be the scene of great outdoor mass meetings. Around it will be placed the Town Hall, the Party Headquarters, the Theatre, and a Feierhalle (Hall of Solemnities). No mention is made of a church in the new town which will be built "to provide for its inhabitants an increased will to live and work." In fact, nothing further has been heard of the town which, the article said, would "rise out of nothingness in the next weeks" under the hands of five thousand laborers. In any event the plan reveals the ultimate intentions of the builders of the new German State to construct not only a physical fabric for the future but a spiritual fabric as well.

So insidiously were the newer ceremonies injected into German public life that many people did not—until the war—become aware of the lengths to which the Nazis had gone in converting patriotic occasions into religious services. Of course, it was possible for Germans to attend the great public ceremonies without feeling conscious of any particular reverence for Hitler; but there can be no doubt that these political spectacles became much more popular than the

relatively colorless church services which had long since ceased to attract the indifferent members of the state church. Nazism was gaudy with color and as loud as a bassdrum. It opened an approach into a brighter world where the old cares and troubles disappeared. People who participated in the mass meetings felt almost irresistibly the animal glow of a common cause, and they very often wanted to rekindle the flame in their unexciting private lives between meetings. As a result the assemblies became more and more frequent, and smaller celebrations were instituted to fill the intervals. No one was forbidden by national order to attend church but there was no time left for Christian activities. Hitler threw the German people into a frenzy which, to say the least, was not dull. For years he kept them at fever pitch with his demands on their emotional reserves until they became emotionally exhausted. Today, as a result, nothing but a sudden peace could rouse the nation from the apathy with which it is stolidly responding to Nazi pleas for still greater exertions in the war effort. Peace is the one thing they want and the one thing Hitler cannot give them.



## CHAPTER II

### *From the Cradle to the Grave*

IN THE midst of the extravagant mass demonstrations staged by the Nazis who have in mind the creation of a new German National (non-Christian) Church, the little fellow—Herr Hans Schmidt—was by no means forgotten. One by one the important events in his modest private life have been drained of their former significance and infused with a new meaning. As Heinrich Himmler says, "We all have the task to train and lead Germans from the cradle to the grave, and to prepare them for the holy fire which burns for Germany."

From cradle to grave means exactly what it implies. The chief events of man's pilgrimage through life are birth, marriage, death, and—in old Germany—confirmation in the church. These all had to be "co-ordinated" because of the church's refusal to submit, but the Nazi high priesthood, in its effort to displace the ceremonies with which the Christian religion has surrounded life's important milestones, has shown very little originality, to say nothing of imagination, in its new religious services. A lot of Germans are beginning to suspect that maybe there isn't much room for improvement. But the would-be founders of a new faith keep on experimenting.

Secular baptismal ceremonies were heard of almost as soon as it became fashionable to be a Nazi, that is, in 1933. Babies were baptized as new hereditary links into the "ancestral chain" and were charged to guard their blood "so that descendants for a thousand years after you will be thankful to you—for God is pure blood!" I know that children of the fervid devotees of the cult of the swastika have been baptized according to this sort of formula. Christening by water and the Holy Spirit is, of course, totally rejected in favor of a so-called simple declaration made by the child's

father: "I swear by God this holy oath, that I am the father of this child of my wife and that I am demonstrably of Aryan descent. As father of this child I promise to raise him in the German spirit to the German Folk." The mother swears a similar oath. Only after this oath has been performed, presumably before an altar embellished with an image of Hitler, can this new member of the national family be given a "German Certificate of Origin" (Deutsche Ursprungsdiplom) which will serve as the basic document for the rest of his life.

Let no one smile at the notion of a birth-diploma who has not seen the "ancestor passport" which must already today be carried by any man, woman, or child in Germany who wants to keep a desirable job or get an education! These booklets are obtainable in various formats and bound in many materials from the cheapest paper to finest leather. Properly foreworded by one of Hitler's less objectionable dicta regarding purity of blood, the following blank pages are prepared for the systematic registration of all essential facts relating to the birth, marriage, and death of some five generations of forefathers.

Unpretentious people with unimportant jobs do not have to trace their Aryan ancestry beyond their grandparents, but in order to enter the SS Elite Guard or any other of the hyper-Nazi agencies it is well to have a family tree that goes back several generations. All data must be entered in these booklets by a responsible authority and stamped with the seal of some recognized civil or religious organization. Space is still provided in the passports for the seal of ecclesiastical authorities, but today no encouragement is given to follow up civil registration with the Christian rite. Ironically enough, the desired facts regarding the past must be dug almost exclusively out of old church records. Nazis are deeply indebted, but by no means grateful, to their Christian ancestors for the piety which has made these modern investigations possible.

Indeed the church can be made to serve the Nazi cause even yet, as I discovered when an American girl once found

herself forced to come to the American church to be baptized in order to obtain the certificate which was needed in order to marry her fiancé who belonged to the SS, which does not permit its members to belong to the Christian church! I insisted on having a talk with the fiancé in order to sound him out on the religious question. He stated that he was still a church member and had no intention of resigning, and that they would have a Christian wedding. The explanation that he offered for still being in the church was that he was an old member of the SS who had joined it before the rule about resigning church membership went into effect. The girl professed deep interest in the Christian faith. After satisfying myself as to catechetical instruction I baptized the girl against my own better judgment—only to find out later that they had never intended to have a Christian wedding. They had lied in order to get a baptismal certificate which was accepted as proof of Aryan ancestry!

No German girl could have satisfied the civil authorities merely with a baptismal certificate of recent date if she had wanted to marry one of the elite; but the government is in this respect more lenient with foreigners because they know that citizens of no other country could possibly supply all the papers they require and, besides, it has been a part of Nazi foreign policy to encourage marriages which might conceivably be beneficial to the state. One of the most effective instruments of the fifth column is an international marriage. To be sure, it is a two-edged sword, but the Gestapo quite properly believes that it can wield the sword to Germany's advantage.

Of course it is impossible for Jews to be baptized in order to become "Aryans," although there has been a number of cases in which Jewish ancestry was simply disregarded at the behest of Hermann Goering, who was reported to have declared on one occasion that he himself would decide who was Aryan and who was not. Run-of-the-mill cases are settled on the basis of an arbitrary line which has been drawn through the year 1880 to divide the Jews from the Christians. All racially Jewish antecedents who were baptized

before that date may be counted as Christian, ergo Aryan, but those who were baptized after it remain racially and religiously Jewish so far as the Nazis are concerned. Of course, there are historical reasons for this, which, however, cannot be discussed now.

A page in the ancestral passport is thoughtfully provided for a bird's-eye view of the husband's (or wife's) family tree and for the names of children. But each member of the family must have his own book. Some books even contain a list of officially approved first names from which the baby's name must invariably be selected in order to avoid trouble with the local authorities. Not even the "un-German" spelling of names which are fairly international and vary slightly in different languages is permitted. Sometimes, however, tricks are pulled on the registrar. In one provincial capital a baby boy was named Edward Franklin Delano George. The parents were British and the war was already a year old, but the local authorities did not come abreast of what had happened until four months after the registration had taken place. The father was called in for questioning and nearly got into serious trouble in spite of the fact that he was a foreigner.

Although there are Nazi kindergartens for small children, German parents enjoy the possession of their children unmolested for the first few years. At the age of six years, however, the German child goes to school and his National Socialist training begins. At ten years he is inducted into the Jungvolk (Young People) along with his classmates, and at fourteen he is transferred to the Hitler Youth. The girls go into the BDM, that is, the League of German Maidens. The graduation ceremonies take place in reverse order, that is, the Hitler Jugend who have reached eighteen step up into the SA (Sturm Abteilung) which is the Storm Trooper army, often called the Brown Shirts. At this point, according to the peacetime schedule, the boys begin their six months of labor service in preparation for two years of military training. About a month later, in March, the Jungvolk who have

attained fourteen years go over into the Hitler Jugend and in the following month the ten year olds are inducted into the Jungvolk which is the lowest rank of the Nazi organization. Even the littlest fellows—called Pimpfen—have ridiculously solemn oaths to swear—all about honor and courage and consecration to the Fatherland, but the ceremony is country-wide.

The fourteenth year, however, remains the great dividing line in the average German life. At this age lower school education is complete and, except for the comparatively few children who go on to higher institutions of learning, schooling is over. Now is the time for boys to be apprenticed in the trades and for girls to begin to prepare for marriage by learning housewifely duties. There have always been certain attractive advantages to this "coming of age." Childhood ceased and young manhood or womanhood formally began. Except in intimate circle, the youth was now addressed as "Sie" (you) rather than "Du" (thou). Some boys began to earn their own livelihood. Girls wore longer skirts, arranged their hair like the grownups, acquired simple evening dresses, began to go to chaperoned parties, and stayed up later at night.

The center of all this excitement in the old days was the Confirmation service for which the boys and girls had prepared during two years of hard catechetical work under the pastor. It was really a social obligation to be confirmed. Sometimes the social aspect of it overshadowed the religious significance. There were parties in honor of the youngsters and they received marvelous gifts from all their acquaintances. Taken by and large, confirmation was as merry as Christmas because of the lush demonstrations of that kindly sentimentality which is one of the most charming German characteristics.

This confirmation service is still an important event in the average youngster's life but, if the Nazis have their way, it is likely to be eclipsed altogether by newer ceremonies. As yet no appreciable decline in the number of confirmands has been admitted by German pastors, and, according to an

American official of the Woolworth Company in Germany, the sale of Confirmation greeting cards kept increasing by leaps and bounds during the Hitler regime. This latter phenomenon may be partially due, however, to nonreligious influences to be found, for example, in the economic situation. Money has become increasingly plentiful in Germany, and, owing to the growing scarcity of many important commodities, it has been expended lavishly in any way that would give the spender some passing satisfaction. Nothing gives a German more satisfaction than bestowing or receiving some little personal attention. On the other hand, it is not to be denied that Confirmation undoubtedly assumed a new significance in the eyes of many older persons who previously had taken it for granted. Statistics, however, do not prove much, as the first chapter showed, and the forces which are working to displace Christianity ought not to be underestimated. The regime is aware of the dangers inherent in a possible renaissance of the Christian faith and is doing everything in its power to prevent a great religious revival, especially among the youth, unless the revival were to be purely Germanic. In the first place the activities of the Hitler Youth have chewed huge chunks out of the time which was available for religious training and church attendance. In the second place the Nazis are instituting a "confirmation service" all their own.

Last year for the first time, on March 22, there was held a nation-wide Nazi "Pledge Day" (*Verpflichtungstag*) which is unquestionably designed to replace the customary religious service. It was even celebrated on Passion Sunday, the Sunday before Palm Sunday, which is the traditional confirmation day. Announcements of this day—but not of Palm Sunday—appeared in all German papers two weeks beforehand. Its connection with the Heroes' Memorial Day of the preceding Sunday was underlined and parents were told how grateful they should be to have the privilege of giving their children to Adolf Hitler. The boys were told that they must continually strive to be worthy of his name and of the chance they would some day have to serve as soldiers in his army.

The three basic agencies in adolescent life were to join forces to make the day memorable: the school, the home, and the party. As a matter of fact, it is upon these three foundation stones that the new system of education has been built. The importance of school has greatly decreased. Graduation from school is confined to a simple farewell from the teachers and the principal. The importance of the home, while lauded and praised, is not really magnified. The destiny of the child, especially after the tenth year, clearly rests in the hands of party leaders who prescribe when and how the school and the home enter into the life of the youngster. In cases where the fourteen year olds go directly into employment, the employer must rig up a little ceremony of welcome and initiation into the comradeship of labor. This is the counterpart of the leave-taking from school. Thus the transfer is accomplished under the paternal eye of the ever-present party.

The main feature of the day is, nevertheless, the pledging of the "confirmands," thus stealing all the thunder of the Christian Confirmation Day. In 1942 the chief ceremony took place in the German Opera House in Berlin where the Reich Youth Leader, Artur Axmann, was to speak. A fanfare call of the Jungvolk and an organ prelude opened the séance. The first song was entitled, "Germany, Sacred Word," followed by a passage from Hitler's writings, presumably *Mein Kampf*. A choir then sang "Country, My Country" preceding a short speech by the Vice-Gauleiter. The big orchestra of the opera played Beethoven's Leonore Overture No. 3. Now came Axmann's address in which he stated that the Reich must be sacred to the Hitler Youth because of the centuries of sacrifice which have made possible the New Reich. Afterwards there was a cantata, "German Confession," and a song, "Holy Fatherland," followed by the Hitler Youth oath of allegiance in which all the boys and girls solemnly joined: "I swear and promise to do my duty in love and loyalty to the Fuehrer and our flag." There was more orchestral music before the service closed with the "honoring of the Leader," that is, "Heil

Hitler!", and the two national anthems, "Deutschland ueber Alles" and the "Horst Wessel Song."

This "Pledge Day," aside from its jingoistic nationalism, is without doubt intended ultimately to replace Christian confirmation, which means replacing the Christian faith. According to the program of the proposed new church, Good Friday will become the feastday of German Youth and Ascension Day is to be the Feast of the German Family. It is interesting to note—for the sake of those who refuse to believe the evidence of their eyes—that a period of "catechetical instruction" is to precede this new confirmation and that the subjects which are already being taught include such themes as, "Adolf Hitler, His Life and Personality," "The Young German Worker," "Content and Significance of the Hitler Youth Pledge." In short, the new plan is complete. With parties and gifts the youth will be led painlessly from one faith to the other and will grow up without ever having heard of the Sermon on the Mount or the Golden Rule, to say nothing of the Ten Commandments.

This goal was openly proclaimed in a book entitled *Gott und Volk* which was distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies throughout the army in the spring of 1941. In Chapter XIII entitled "Our Task" there is a paragraph which says, "The education of the youth is to be confided primarily to the teacher, the officer, and the leaders of the party. The priests will die out. They have estranged the youth from the Volk. Into their places will step the leaders. Not deputies of God. But anyway the best Germans. And how shall we train up our children? Thus, as though they had never heard of Christianity! We will take them out into Nature and show them God's wonders. We will teach them our sacred history."

The Nazi outlook on marriage as presented by this same book is, "In the future there will be only one German nuptial consecration. Marriages will not be consecrated in the church. They will be dedicated to the community."

The effect of Nazi marriage propaganda on German, and



even on non-German, youngsters who were exposed to it has been extraordinary. The thoughts of the girls especially are wholly consumed with the one purpose of getting married, and in many cases their tremendous preoccupation with the prospect of matrimony induces an emotional instability which not infrequently leads to hysteria and nervous collapse. They are not fascinated so much by the dream of giving babies to Hitler as by an unhealthy yearning to explore as soon as possible the mysteries of that family life which has been held before their young eyes as the ultimate earthly felicity. It is hard to appraise this phenomenon without going into a psychoanalytical study of young Germany. Therefore the fact is merely recorded. Suffice it to say that this preoccupation appears to fester in the minds of teenage girls, especially those who are high-strung, and it poisons their adolescence from the age of puberty. As a consequence there has been an abnormal increase in the number of marriages which began to show signs of halting only with the second year of the war. The flood of babies born of these unions began to recede only with the third war year.

As far as the wedding ceremony is concerned, the effort has long since been made to glorify the civil rite to such an extent that the church ceremony will seem superfluous. The marriage clerk's office has been refurbished and the official himself does not lose the opportunity to admonish the young couple in a lengthy and paternal discourse on the communal life into which they are being launched. Of course, he is instructed to do this and told what to say. In large cities, where one ceremony follows the other in rapid succession, these talks have a tendency to become hackneyed and perfunctory. The reported presentation of copies of *Mein Kampf* to newlyweds is not a regular thing, but the personality of Adolf Hitler pervades the atmosphere. At the conclusion of one ceremony at which I happened to be present the license for the subsequent church wedding was handed over to the groom with a careless gesture that plainly said, "Of course, if you really feel that that is necessary . . ." Indeed, after satisfying all the requirements of Nazi German

bureaucracy, one is inclined to wonder whether the clerk isn't right.

Banns must be published in the city hall for at least three weeks before the civil ceremony can take place. This occurs after all other papers, including a tax statement and the proof of Aryan descent, have been assembled over a period of months. On the appointed day and at the appointed hour the wedding party—usually the bride and groom, two official witnesses, and perhaps a few friends—enters the outer office where two or three other wedding parties are seated at plain tables awaiting their turn. Some parties are very gay and others are pathetically glum. A large portrait of Hitler frowns from the wall above a long, painted citation from one of his speeches in which he glorifies the national privilege and duty of marriage in so far as it helps to increase the population of the country. Presently the stenographer at a desk near the door into the inner sanctum calls upon the two official witnesses to give their birthdates, professions, and other personal data.

When the time came for our party to enter the inner room from which a newly married couple emerged, we found a small chamber with a long oak table stretched across the far end. Behind it sat the marriage clerk in a tight black suit with a party button on his coat lapel. On the near side of the table were two chairs for bride and groom, and at either end of the long board was a chair for each of the witnesses. Three objects were scattered along the table: a cactus plant, the record book, and a big, flat, empty earthenware bowl. After we were seated and feeling sufficiently self-conscious, the official arose and made a four- or five-minute speech on the solemnity of the occasion and the need for sympathy and steadfastness in the marital relationship. From time to time he paused and it seemed quite evident that he was deleting certain inappropriate paragraphs from his usual harangue, probably the passages about the purity of German blood and the privilege of producing babies for Hitler. After all, they would be of very little value to a pair of Americans.

The speech concluded, he sat down and read through the entire marriage contract. We had a last chance to make any additions or corrections. As so often happened in Germany where Herman is a popular first name, my last name had been given first place by the stenographer. During the small eternity it took to correct this we all sat and stared at each other or at the ceiling or at the cactus. Finally, we were able to sign the document, shake hands all around, and depart.

According to the New Church Program, which will be discussed in the next chapter and which the government disowns, there will be no more religious ceremonies except at Nazi altars where the bride and groom will exchange a pledge of loyalty with their hands upon the sword which lies to the left of *Mein Kampf*. Under no circumstances will "unworthy kneeling" be tolerated. Whether the program is bogus or not, interesting experiments have been made with this particular ceremony. Enthusiastic couples in many parts of Germany have been tied with various kinds of Nazi matrimonial knots. The main trend has been toward old Germanic customs savoring of the Song of the Nibelungen. In Mecklenburg there was a vogue of pagan ceremonies solemnized in the open air with symbolic fires, sheaves of wheat, virginal garlands, and so forth.

At Heikendorf near Kiel occurred a Nazi wedding which drew a crowd of 250 people who listened to a long speech about German marriage versus Jewish-Christian-Roman weddings and then saw a wreath of roses lifted from the bride's head and cast into the "sacrificial fire." After the new myrtle (take note!) wreath was set upon her brow the speaker joined the hands of the couple and gave them his blessing, "May light be in you and around you; may light be before you and behind you!" This was all part and parcel of the Nazi idea that the ancient Germans were uncorrupted until the advent of Christianity. *Gott und Volk* says, "The relation of the sexes to each other was just as healthy and natural as faith itself. But Christianity had to come and inject into this pure relation the baseness and vileness of its oriental morality. Since then we have suffered from it."

Long before the outbreak of war I found a little book entitled *The Marriage Ceremony*, published in Stuttgart by the *Durchbruch Verlag* (Break-through Publishers). It contained five suggestions for ceremonies both indoor and out together with explicit diagrams, appropriate poems, and practical hints. Actually these ceremonies resemble little pageants to be acted out by the wedding company before a sacred fire behind which looms, if indoors, a bust or portrait of Hitler, or, if outdoors, a green tree. Swastika flags are, of course, hung in profusion. As yet such ceremonies are relatively uncommon because the city-bred Germans are too sophisticated to take this playacting seriously and the country people are too conservative to embrace quickly such radical departures from tradition. A paragraph from the preface to this thin volume bears quotation:

This booklet will aid all those who have broken away from Christianity and wish, as genuine Germans, to celebrate their wedding without priestly blessings . . . The question to be discussed here is not "marriage ceremony or not?" That is the affair of each couple. Marriage ceremony is not a solely Christian custom; our forefathers were familiar with this festival long before Christianity was introduced into Germany. For them it was a tribal festival such as it should be again with us. But most of our fellow-Germans of this transition period do not yet know how to arrange such a ceremony. For just these fellow-Germans this collection of models and suggestions will be a comradely aid.

The author, who obviously is a professional "arranger of ceremonies," omits from the suggested rituals any pledge of eternal fidelity for the reason that "German love presupposes eternal fidelity." Let us sketch in swiftly the high points of a typical wedding.

Up the flower-bordered aisle—lined in all likelihood with uniforms of some sort—come bride and groom followed by youths and maidens likewise in the uniform of the Hitler Youth or dressed simply in white blouses and blue trousers or skirts. Family and friends in the assembly greet them with

a "*stummer Gruess*," that is, with arms upraised in a silent "Heill!" The children are to be painfully clean, of course, and carrying torches. Before the fireurn are two chairs in which the couple seat themselves while the fire is solemnly kindled by the first torchbearer.

Directions regarding the fireurn are explicit. If a proper iron bowl is not available, a dishpan or tin pail disguised with evergreen branches will do nicely. To avoid wasteful and perhaps dangerous evaporation of the kerosene, it is advised that the urn be covered with a saucepan lid until shortly before the ceremony begins. To prevent a general conflagration, the evergreen is to be made soaking wet and the urn to be kept at a safe distance from all curtains and the Fuehrer's picture. A bucket of sand should be placed on the floor behind the stand on which the urn is placed so that the torch which has been used to ignite the kerosene may easily be extinguished. Under no circumstances is the fire to be lighted with a humble match or modest candle!

Now the ceremony really begins. Heroic music is played and then a chorus of Hitler Youth sings a song from Heinrich Spitta's Songbook entitled "The Sun Does Not Set On Us." A boy and a girl on either side of the urn—but far enough away so as not to become overheated—now begin alternately to recite. Naturally it is wise to select children with clear voices and good memories! First, the girl's ode to the fire:

O sun-related, sacrosanct flame, leap upwards!  
Token of honor and purity Thou,  
Lighting these lovers their way by night!  
Passionate love must Thou impart them,  
Deep love of homeland, of family, and folk!

The boy counters with this rhyme addressed to the wedding company:

Comrades and blood-cousins!  
In us the same blood flows;  
Sprung from one native earth,  
Our nordic courage glows!

Older than churches and cloisters  
Is our ancestral land!  
Stronger than pastors' blessing  
Holds our blood's firm band!  
Brethren, our Reich is here  
Upon this earth below;  
To foster its welfare  
Is the only aim we know!

'After more music and a poem about living one thousand years before yourself and after yourself in the blood of your family, a duly invited guest speaker gives a short talk complimenting the pair on their perspicacity in recognizing in Christianity an "alien doctrine" and on returning to the ancestral fire when love's spark began to flame in them. The speech closes with the assertion that, for anyone who calls himself German, mating is a profound inner compulsion of nature which must be revered and obeyed in order that Germany may live.

After still more poetry and more music a maiden comes to the bride and removes from the latter's head a wreath of fragile blossoms and throws it into the fire where it is to be consumed as a symbol of surrendered virginity. Then a simple wreath of plain evergreen is taken from behind the urn of fire and placed on the bride's head to indicate her married estate. Only good German flowers should be used! The wreath must under no circumstances be woven of "foreign" myrtle which heretofore has been *de rigueur* at all German weddings! In winter the substitution of paper flowers for the real thing is strictly forbidden. Nor may the garlands be fastened to the head with hairpins. That would cause complications.

After the change of garlands a member of the company reads a passage from Nietzsche, Germany's philosopher of the superman to whom Christianity is a slave morality, and finally two wedding rings are brought forward on a simple wooden plate embellished with a runic inscription. The bride and groom place the bands on one another's fingers

and stand up while one of the maidens speaks this word of Adolf Hitler: "In woman we see the eternal mother of our people and man's companion in life, work, and struggle." The singing of "Deutschland ueber Alles" and the "Horst Wessel Song" concludes the ceremony. The fire is extinguished by covering the kerosene bucket with the saucepan lid, and the plate on which the rings lay is given to the couple as a wedding present.

It must be said that such ceremonies as this one which has just been described have not received official sanction. In fact the government professes to frown on them, although nothing has been done, so far as I know, to stop them. This does not mean, however, that the Nazi State thereby lends the weight of its support to the Christian ceremony. On the contrary, the standpoint of the Nazi party is that it and the State are one. Ergo, the civil ceremony carries the Nazi blessing with it and no other ceremony is necessary. It is believed, however, that the civil ceremony, which up till now had been nothing more than a perfunctory formality preceding the religious rite, must be elevated to its rightful primacy and be enhanced to correspond with its place in the new scheme of things.

In August, 1938, Dr. Foerg, Municipal Counsellor at Augsburg, published a series of recommendations for the elaboration of the civil ceremony, stating that the majority of civil weddings—especially in rural communities—were not in keeping with the spirit of the times. He deplored the fact that so many party members felt it necessary to supplement the civil ceremony with a "party wedding" and that many others, who did not undertake to organize a special Nazi ceremony, were thereby denied a suitable and worthy consecration of the marriage vows. This state of affairs, he declared, is intolerable. "Just as marriage is one of the fundamentals of the Reich," he said, "so the wedding ceremony is the sole and exclusive right of the State, the exercise of which cannot be shared with anyone." The party, therefore, ought not to imitate the church in instituting its own rite, but

should see to it that the civil ceremony is made to conform with the desires and demands of National Socialist thought.

Dr. Foerg went on to say that the marriage office must be properly decorated with a picture or bust of the Fuehrer and with the Swastika banner. The room must be large enough to hold the relatives and friends of the bridal pair and it must contain a harmonium or grand piano which will be used to lend to the occasion an "artistic setting." In the country districts a room in the Party House is to be set aside for this purpose, thus, apparently, carrying the ceremony completely out of the local civil office. The civic official is to wear his party uniform and the ceremony, which is to include musical presentations and a speech by a party officer of high rank, is to be opened and closed with the Hitler greeting.

All these suggestions were directly inspired by the new Nazi Marriage Law which was promulgated exactly one month before this speech and went into effect on August 1, 1938. The "frightful conditions" existing in newly annexed Austria were made the excuse for a thorough overhauling of the whole concept of marriage, going even beyond the alterations already made in Germany for the "protection of German blood." Berlin papers declared that Austrian family life had been corrupted and public life poisoned by the old marriage laws which gave the Catholic Church full authority to marry or to annul marriages without State sanction.

Unquestionably there was need of reform in Austria and, in the interests of national order, the variety of statutes in the old German principalities could well stand simplification, but the Nazis were obviously not interested solely in recodification. In the first place, they wanted to insure a maximum production of children; secondly, they aimed not only to prevent mixed marriages with non-Aryans, but to break up mixed families; thirdly, they were determined to supplant the nuptial blessing of the Christian Church with the nuptial blessing of the Nazi State. "The new Marriage Law of Greater Germany," said the Propaganda Ministry, "recognizes only *one* kind of marriage, namely, the wedding performed



by civil officials in the name of the Reich." Marriage, this declaration states, is no longer merely a private contract closed by two persons but a public act which is of great significance to the Volk and must therefore be regulated in the interests of the Volk. In short, it must be concluded that marriage in Germany is being nationalized in a manner which reveals just as plainly as does the "confirmation" of the Hitler Youth, the existence of a new religion of the State.

At the time of death, to a greater extent than at any other of life's chief milestones, do the various religious efforts of the New Germany find their most characteristic expression. It early became the recommended Nazi custom to delegate a member of the local party organization as a representative—Tammany Hall style—to attend the funeral of a deceased member and to bring aid and comfort to the bereaved family. Invariably this delegate came armed with a short speech to be delivered during the service, if the minister consented, or immediately after the benediction had been pronounced. Nine times out of ten this representative was sent by the local unit of the German Labor Front which had looked after the employees of the business or industry to which the deceased belonged. As almost everybody in Germany now stands in some direct relationship to a party organization it is virtually impossible to visualize a heap of floral tributes at a German funeral without seeing at least one wreath flaunting a flaming red ribbon emblazoned with the Crooked Cross.

On several occasions when I was asked to conduct the funeral services of some American or Englishman who had intimate German connections, the relatives of the deceased came to me with the letter received from the competent organization naming its official "mourner" who was empowered to deliver a short speech. To avoid unnecessary embarrassment for the family, especially in cases where the payment of a death benefit or pension hung on the balance, I agreed to the delegate's presence at the service provided that his speech be reserved until the end of the Christian

rite. Actually, the speeches which I heard proved to be very simple and acceptable tributes to the virtues of a friend and fellow worker, very similar in strain to the type of eulogy pronounced at funerals in America on behalf of fraternal organizations. For instance, at one funeral which I conducted for a former actress the representative of the Nazi theatrical union came and spoke with obvious sincerity about the drama of life. He got out of bounds only once when he tried to describe prayer as a "true art." The solemnity of death seemed to put a damper on Nazis who, at least in the presence of an American clergyman, retained a sense of the fitness of things. But, at a later date, I was to have the mortifying experience of seeing a widow, who was a loyal member of my congregation, deprived of the pension from her husband's firm because the funeral service had been conducted in the English language.

Gradually the number of purely National Socialist services increased, at least in the larger cities where people had fallen away from the church. The one beneficial result of this was to relieve metropolitan pastors of the burden of purely formal obsequies for parish members who had not been near a church since their confirmation or marriage.

It is not difficult to visualize the ritual that was now evolved for those who preferred a Nazi burial. Swastikas and uniforms provide the background amid a profusion of flowers. Variations of the Memorial Day service described above are used with special emphasis on tragic poetry designed to magnify even in peacetime the patriotic significance of death: the German must die in order that Germany may live! The scene is altogether barbaric in its quality of medieval splendor. I saw the conclusion of such a service in the Wilmersdorf Crematorium in Berlin just before I was to conduct a Christian ceremony. The chapel altar, which was not used, was almost concealed from view by the lights which were focused on the flower-covered casket. As the last lines of a heroic poem were read, eight Storm Troopers in brown uniform standing at the bier silently dipped the swastika standards which they held and the body

was lowered into the floor to the strains of the "Horst Wessel Song."

On a grander scale this is the tenor of state funerals which are accorded to leading figures in the army or party, except that most of them have been buried rather than cremated. Incidentally, cremation has received official sanction, in defiance of old Christian compunctions no doubt, and a notice to that effect is placed in a prominent position in one Berlin crematory located in the poorer section of the city where services are crowded in at half-hour intervals from 8 a. m. to 7 p. m. Burial in a cemetery, at least near the cities, has come to signify a disregard of additional expense, as cremation is considerably cheaper.

The winter of 1941-1942 brought a quick succession of state funerals for Ernst Udet and Colonel Moelders, both of them air heroes, Field Marshal von Reichenau and Reich Minister Fritz Todt. Later came the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. If any of them had Christian services, the fact was concealed from the general public,<sup>1</sup> but all of them had fine funerals. Amidst cannon and banners Field Marshal von Reichenau was buried from the Berlin Armory. The casket was surrounded by four high, black, flame-bearing pylons, quantities of flowers, and the standards of the old and new armies. The service began with the *Andante* from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Reich Marshal Hermann Goering struck the keynote: "Providence has called him to the Great Army where he can report on the new German forces fighting under the glorious leadership of Adolf Hitler." Nineteen salvos echoed from the Lustgarten as General Field Marshal von Rundstedt bade brief farewell to his fellow officer. A roll of drums led to the "Song of the Good Comrade," after which Goering laid the wreath of the Reich Chancellor at the foot of the casket and von Rundstedt laid another inscribed *Der Fuehrer*. The national anthems were sung. As postlude, the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth was

<sup>1</sup> This series of deaths of men in their prime carried with it, as usual, a wave of rumors and popular suspicions regarding the published account of the circumstances in which they occurred.

played. Whereupon the body was transferred to the Invalidenfriedhof, the German Arlington.

These final honors stand in glaring contrast to the deliberate indifference which greeted the death of General von Fritsch in front of Warsaw in the first month of the war, although he was far more deserving of the last tributes of the nation. To him goes much of the credit for the maintenance of the German Army during the Weimar days and without that army the new army would never have been possible. But von Fritsch stood in the way of the attack on Austria and he was pushed out of power in February, 1938, just before the beginning of the aggressions. Besides, it was well known that he had boldly made several protestations on behalf of the church just at the time when the religious issue was paramount in the public mind.

The general reaction to the circumstances of his death was one of incredulity. Just before war broke he had been put back into harness and he went into Poland at the head of his troops. There were rumors that he was shot from behind, that is, by Germans, and other rumors that he had deliberately committed suicide by repeatedly exposing himself to enemy fire. In any event, his death did not even receive front-page notice. On a cold wet day toward the end of September he was buried in Berlin. Flags were flown at half-mast and an account of the obsequies was printed on the front pages, but there were none of the extravagant headlines and multisyllabic adjectives which underscore the death of a Nazi favorite. There was a brief service in front of the Unknown Soldier's Memorial on Unter den Linden at which Commander in Chief von Brauchitsch spoke. Hitler was not present although he had dropped everything the year before to attend his chauffeur's funeral. No publicity was given to the fact that there was also a religious service upon which the family had insisted. Indeed the last time I can recall that public notice was given to the religious funeral service of a high-ranking officer was at the death of General Hans von Seeckt in December, 1936, when the state funeral followed the Christian ceremony.

Dr. Fritz Todt, brilliant engineer and master-builder, received a funeral even grander than von Reichenau's. He was buried from the new German Chancellery while the flags in Berlin flew at half-mast for him who, among other titles, was honored with those of Reich minister, SA Obergruppenfuehrer, Major General in the Air Force, Builder of the West Wall, Creator of the Atlantic Coastal Fortifications, Armorer of the Reich. Hitler himself was present, entering after his huge wreath had been carried in by two soldiers bending under the load. The bereaved family arrived under the escort of Professor Speer, Dr. Todt's successor. The Funeral March from Beethoven's *Eroica* was followed by Hitler's oral tribute, at the end of which he pinned a new medal to the middle one of three cushions bearing Dr. Todt's several emblems of distinction. "The Song of the Good Comrade" was followed by the placing of Hitler's floral tribute.

Ludwig Uhland's "Song of the Good Comrade" conveys something of the melancholy, military spirit which pervades the Nazi ceremony. Originally an expression of individual heartbreak at the loss of a comrade in arms, it has become the sentimental theme song of a nation of professional soldiers who glory in the masochistic restraint of their own natural emotions.

A translation runs as follows:

I had a friend and comrade,  
None knew a better boy.  
The drums are calling loudly.  
See, how he answers proudly!  
To walk with him was joy.

*Chorus:*

The birds in the woods are singing,  
Are singing to warm your heart.  
At home, ah, at home, your dear ones  
We'll meet and never will part.  
Gloria! Gloria! Victoria!  
With heart and hand for the Fatherland!

A bullet came to meet us—  
Was it meant for you or me?  
It struck him down, and, calling  
My name, I saw him falling.  
He seemed a part of me.

Once more he tried to touch me;  
I could not take his hand.  
My gun must be loaded quickly.  
Remain in heaven, pray thee,  
My comrade and my friend.

Incidentally, by lifting the Latin word "Victoria" from this song, the Nazis tried cleverly but unsuccessfully to cope with the British "V-for-victory" campaign in occupied Europe. Germans themselves have painted "V" all over the continent.

The significant element of all National Socialist obsequies is the placing of Hitler's wreath like a benediction upon the coffin. This is obviously the climax of the service. In his absence the wreath is a token of his presence and the seal of his approbation. The setting of the service is never a church. For example, Bavarian State Secretary, Major General, SA Obergruppenfuehrer Hofmann was buried from the Cupola Hall of the War Museum in Munich, and Robert Bosch, outstanding industrialist, from the King Karl Hall of the Industrial Museum at Stuttgart where eight workers stood as his guard of honor. The guard is, according to the status of the deceased, drawn from one or another of the military or semi-military or pseudo-military formations.

A fairly clear line of demarcation can be drawn between the soldiers who die in the old faith and those who die for the new. It is to be seen in the death notices which appear in the various newspapers, a few each day. In the first place there is a noticeable difference of tone in the announcements which are inserted in, let us say, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, both of Berlin. The former is still a fairly conservative paper whereas the latter is Hitler's own organ published by Alfred Rosenberg.

A typical notice in the *DAZ*, as it is usually called, reads like this:

God in His inscrutable wisdom has seen fit to call away from this earth our beloved, promising, warmhearted son who responded to the call of duty and gave his young life for his Fatherland.

But in the party paper one is more likely to find this sort of notice:

For Fuehrer and Fatherland, in proud eagerness to defend the new Great German Reich from its Bolshevistic foes, our beloved, promising, courageous son was killed in action on the Eastern Front, believing firmly in the final victory.

There are, of course, as many different wordings as there are notices. Some are laconic and pitiful: "Dazed with unspeakable grief we herewith announce the death of our last son . . ." or, ". . . the death of my boy who followed his father killed in the last war and did not live to see his own baby boy." Lately the notices of 17-year-old casualties have become more frequent. That all mention of religion is not yet completely banned from the German press is borne out by occasional notices which speak of the death of boys who had prepared themselves for the Catholic priesthood or Protestant pastorate and were soon to have been ordained.

Thus, from the cradle to the grave the Nazi ideology is contending for the souls of the German people. Many of the older people still feel that they are living and dying in their old faith; but the respite which they have enjoyed is owing only to the fact that not even Hitler can completely alter a nation of many millions in just a few years. Judging by the Soviet experiments, it would take a few generations to wipe out the last vestiges of Christianity in Germany or convert the church to Nazism, that is, if the Nazis should win their war and if they should devote all their energies to that end. In the meantime many things are happening, and will continue to happen.

### CHAPTER III

#### *The Plan for a Nazi Church*

THE most startling notice of what is happening to religion in Germany, despite all previous newspaper accounts of persecution and paganism in the Third Reich, was given to the American public by President Roosevelt in his this-is-a-shooting-war speech of October 27, 1941, in which he also revealed that he had in his possession a map of South America as it would look after Hitler got through with it.

I have no doubt that the president was acting in good faith when he focused the attention of the world on this allegedly secret Nazi plan for the abolition of all religions in Germany and the establishment of a Nationale Reichskirche whose mission would be the propagation of the Hitlerian gospel. By coincidence, Mr. Douglas Miller, who was formerly the United States Commercial Attaché in Berlin and wrote *You Can't Do Business With Hitler*—acting independently of the White House—published the text of the 30-Point Church Program in *Life* magazine the following month.<sup>1</sup>

There are two things about this highly publicized plan which are well worth brief study before proceeding to a closer examination of what is happening to the German soul under the Fuehrer's spiritual guidance: in the first place, as an official document of the Nazi regime the New Church Program is probably bogus, and in the second place, its spirit is unquestionably authentic. One proof of the truth of that statement rests in the fact that while the German press repudiated the authorship of the document, no assurance was given that its contents were untrue to what will happen, in fact, to what has already happened, to religion under Hitler! But it is not necessary to rely on the statements of the German press as to Nazi goals.

<sup>1</sup> The Program is reprinted in Appendix I.



It is significant that various versions of the program had already achieved a fairly extensive, if clandestine, circulation in Germany many months before our embassy in Berlin—just prior to the President's speech—received an inquiry from the Department of State regarding it. Indeed when I set out to collect copies of the program on behalf of the embassy report, I gathered five slightly different versions of the illicit document in the short space of two days. Two of the German pastors whom I consulted at that time stated that they had known of the plan for at least six months and one of the copies which came to my hands was dated May, 1941! When the German Propaganda Ministry, however, set out to repudiate the program, in an effort to counteract the White House announcement, it stupidly stated that the program was known to have originated with the British because copies of it had *recently* been dropped from enemy planes in South Germany! In line with the Nazi technique of smothering all news of religious matters the whole subject was immediately banned from the press and no paper dared to bring it up again.

This piece of clumsy counterpropaganda satisfied neither the public at home nor the rest of the world. Even if there were a more reliable date of origin which could be given, the question of authenticity could hardly be settled. It is interesting to note, nevertheless, that one of my copies which at the top of the text was dated August, 1941, carried the inscription "In the fifth year of the national time-reckoning" at the bottom. If the day of Hitler's coming to power, January 30, 1933, is taken as the beginning of the new era, the program could then be dated in 1937 or early 1938. It was indeed at about that time, as we shall see later, that the Nazi government appeared to abandon its last attempts to "co-ordinate" the church. On the other hand, new suspicions as to the legitimacy of the plan are aroused by the fact that almost no use is made in Germany of this Mussolini-esque predilection for dating all time from the inauguration of a Fascist era.

The program's place of birth is as elusive as its date of

birth. In Berlin it was believed to have first seen the light of day somewhere in South Germany, either in Munich or in Freiburg along the upper Rhine. None of the five copies which I had carried any indication as to the birthplace but not a single German who knew of the document gave credence to the possibility of English origin. They all felt that it came from within the country, even though some people thought that the British may have scattered copies of it in their raids in order to apprise the strongly religious South Germans of what was going on in their own country. As a matter of fact, we in Berlin never received confirmation of the claim that the RAF had dropped such leaflets anywhere in the Reich; but that is entirely comprehensible when it is remembered that the whole story broke within two months of the internment of our embassy staff and that such news sometimes travels slowly owing to the death penalty attached to the dissemination of enemy propaganda.

So much for what scholars would call the "external evidence" surrounding the appearance of this program. Who, then, wrote it? Was it the work of an *agent provocateur* who merely wanted to embarrass the regime and sabotage the war effort by forcing the church issue again into the limelight, or was it the work of a Nazi fanatic who, with or without orders, drew up a list of suggestions regarding the eventual disposition of Christianity and the erection of a new religion?

Both of these hypotheses are worth considering. In connection with the first one, it may be pointed out that there has been a series of very clever and troublesome "documents" circulated within the Reich in the last year or so. One of them was the famous "Moelders' letter," purported to have been written by the Luftwaffe ace and circulated after his death last fall in a plane crash. Addressed to the Catholic Bishop of Stettin, it contained strong criticism of the Nazi anti-church and mercy-death policies, and credence was lent to the letter because it was well known that Colonel Moelders' sister is a nun. Finally, the government forced the Catholic army bishop to go to the Bishop of Stettin for a statement that he had never received such a letter from

Moelders nor been acquainted with the aviator. This was announced in the *Voelkischer Beobachter* on March 14, 1942, together with the fact that an unstated number of people had been put into concentration camp for spreading the letters and that 100,000 Reichsmarks were offered as a reward for any information regarding the author and distributor of the spurious epistle.

With regard to the second hypothesis it may be said that Nazi radicals have spent much time and thought on the destruction of the Christian church, especially since they have come to feel that Christianity is a galling deterrent to the ruthless measures which must be taken if their New World Order is to be realized. One pastor told me that he was sure that the program had originated with some minor Nazi in the Brown House at Munich which is the headquarters of the party and the center of the geopolitical ideology. But he—and the other churchmen to whom I spoke—betrayed no particular concern over the program because it contained nothing with which they were not already familiar. Why become excited, they said, about the exposure of an allegedly secret plan when the nation is already faced with the stern reality of Christian oppression and the growth of a new paganism? In other words, to argue whether or not the Thirty Points spring from Nazi, Christian, Communist, or even Jewish sources is immaterial as long as they aptly summarize the attitude of the men in power.

Either of the two hypotheses which have been considered would explain the unfinished appearance of the program which, to my mind, is the strongest evidence that it does not represent a final declaration of Wilhelmstrasse policy filched presumably from the secret files—or even the inside breastpocket—of some such high-placed personage as Heinrich Himmler or Alfred Rosenberg with whose views it unquestionably coincides. Himmler has opposed the church at every turn and forbidden his select troopers to belong to it. Assigned to him also are the intriguing tasks of “investigating the prehistoric Germans, working out the problems of racial breeding, reviving Nordic Germanic traditions, and

activating a new farm life." This dovetails with Rosenberg's work as chief high priest and prophet of a new mystical faith.

Therefore, when the openly anti-Christian attitude of Nazi leaders is recalled, the source of the plan's inspiration becomes obvious, but the little touches which observers who have lived in the Third Reich for several years expect to find in all official pronouncements of policy are missing. As a general rule, Hitler and his henchmen "think of everything" but if they wrote it, they have not thought of everything in this program. The style of the document does not ring true to the usual coinage of the Nazi ideological mint. The text is not sufficiently stamped with a certain unmistakable cachet of twisted logic, brutal thoroughness, and Prussian economy of words.

Despite the fact that Germans still employ the word coffee for burnt barley, I cannot believe, for example, that they will retain the word "church" for their religious substitute. In setting up a new religion, Nazidom's rabid anti-Christians would avoid using Christian terms and symbols like the ersatz Apostles' Creed which was printed in one of the versions of the program which circulated in Germany, but which was not included in Douglas Miller's copy. It may be translated as follows:

We believe in an eternal New Reich.

We believe in the new world-view, which during the great struggle of German humanity with all the peoples of the earth was born in the heart of a man named Adolf Hitler.

We believe that Almighty God restored to this soldier, who was blinded in the World War, the sight of his eyes; and we believe, perceive, and experience now in this man, who was sent to us, the Savior and Leader of our German nation, our Reich, and our People united by blood.

We believe in his almighty, holy, scriptural work *Mein Kampf*; we swear to follow according to our best knowledge and ability all his commands contained therein; and, in so far as we truly fulfill them, we believe that we dare confess: "Master, we stand before thee, free of sin!"

We are pledged both body and soul to our Leader, Adolf Hitler, and to our German People, and we swear publicly and in unison, "Adolf Hitler, we shall remain true to thee."

Although this rapturous declaration is well under the stratospheric ceiling attainable by some fanatical Germans soaring on the wild wings of Nazi enthusiasm, it is hard to believe that the creed is genuine. Hitler's high priests, if they really set to work, can produce something better than that.

The same can be said for most of the Thirty Points which, upon analysis, prove to be less complete than they appear at first reading. It is not necessary to reproduce here the entire text, which is prolix and can be found in Appendix I. The whole thing can be boiled down to four general points:

1. Establishment of a German National Church.

Assumption of all ecclesiastical prerogatives in Germany and her colonies (sic) by a Nationale Reichskirche (NRK) which will be organized on a basis of voluntary individual membership. Irrevocable reversion of all church property to the state as a token of the final fusion of the new church and the state.

2. Abolition of Christianity.

Liquidation of all Christian communions as well as elimination of other similarly un-German religious organizations, especially those with international connections. Suppression of all religious literature, including the Bible which is not to be published or imported.

3. New Doctrine.

Establishment of Hitler's unaltered *Mein Kampf* as a complete guide to Germans in their "life-struggle." Enshrinement of this book on all altars with a sword to its left. While the new religion "worships God and his imperishable works," the chief teaching will be "Volk und Rasse" (i.e., one's own people and race). There will be no forgiveness of sins, which—it must be prayed—are rather to be avenged by natural law during one's natural life.

4. Priesthood, Services, and Sacraments.

Replacement of clergymen (who are allegedly defending Christian doctrine merely to safeguard their positions and

income) by National Socialist orators who will have the status of civil servants and whose task will be to expound *Mein Kampf* to the best of their knowledge and ability.

Services, festively illuminated, are to be held only in the evenings, preferably on Saturday. Christian celebrations are to be replaced by Nazi festivals. Baptism and marriage are to be celebrated only according to Nazi rites.

The incompleteness of this program becomes especially noticeable in the latter two points. It is disappointing to find no proper summary of the new "theology" in the section on doctrine. By German standards the mere mention of *Volk und Rasse* presents no adequate picture of Nazi teachings, even though supported by *Mein Kampf*. And why have confirmation and funeral services been left out when, as a matter of fact, it is in these two ceremonies that the new religion has made the most headway? One of the chief omissions is the failure to attach a time fuse to the bomb which is thus put under the old church.

Yet there can be no doubt that many phases of this program are being pressed toward completion regardless of the existence of a master plan and, in the course of time, the apparently isolated pieces of the puzzle will take the shape of a new religion. The Hitler Youth organizations, which now comprise virtually every child in Germany, have been educating the boys and girls away from the church for years both by active precept and by the passive absorption of all the child's time. The Black Guards—the "flower" of German manhood—are forbidden to maintain church connections. The new Air Arm under Goering has no chaplains. Religious items are excluded from daily newspapers, unless there is occasion to vilify some foreign clergyman for criticizing Germany or, contrariwise, to praise him for saying a good word for the Third Reich. For example, the former Archbishop of Canterbury has been the object of outrageously indecent treatment in the German press, but a Swedish dean who sponsored the German "crusade" in Russia re-

ceived very flattering attention from papers which have not printed statements by local pastors for years.

Films are likewise scrupulously irreligious. Even the Spanish film *Alcazar* which glorified the Franco cause was censored and purged of every reference to prayer or faith in God. The famous St. Thomas Choir of Leipzig dresses now in Hitler Youth uniforms for its concerts and presents secular programs. The Handel oratorios—even *The Messiah*—have been revised to match the new anti-semitic views, and two of them have been given entirely new texts in order that the fine music might again be “made available” to the public. *Judas Maccabeus* has become *Wilhelm of Nassau*, and *Israel in Egypt* was being rewritten last winter by the “well-known writers” Harke and Kloecking into *The Mongol Storm*. The latter was to have its première in Hamburg late in 1942.

The new religious trends are bearing fruit even faster in the supine occupied territories than in the Old Reich. In the Warthegau, namely, the district around Posen in former Poland, measures were introduced last fall to cut every church tie leading outside the local district in order to subordinate all religious organizations to the local Gauleiter and, eventually, to kill off church life altogether. Similar efforts seem to have been commenced in Alsace but, owing to the stout resistance of local pastors, appear for the present to have been checked. In other words, these reacquired areas apparently have been seized upon as guinea pigs for anti-Christian experiments.

These few brief illustrations, which later will be multiplied and discussed at length, are presented as evidence of the fact that Nazi regime has not waited for the proclamation of any plan or even for the secret circulation of such a program—which would have been verified from a hundred private sources—in order to go to work. Yet, through it all the fiction of “positive Christianity” has been maintained and, for proof, the Propaganda Ministry points out that no churches in Germany have been closed and that churches in atheistic Russia have been reopened by the German armies.

Regardless of what Dr. Goebbels may say the National Socialist movement, aside from its totalitarian pretensions, has always had certain fundamental objections to the continued existence of an unco-ordinated Christian church within the borders of the Reich. Thoroughgoing National Socialists as well as thoroughgoing Christians soon perceived that there were irreconcilable divergencies in their respective faiths. All efforts to discover a common denominator were foredoomed to failure and none of the first-class minds in either camp can be said to have pursued the search with enthusiastic conviction or real hope of success. Individuals who claim to have integrated a dual Nazi-Christian loyalty in their own lives are invariably the victims of self-delusion; either they worship one deity and pay lip service to the other, or they have simply compartmentalized their inner being and naïvely divided their devotion into equal portions.

Astute observers of the Nazi movement were quick to perceive a conflict of church and party interests and to prophesy that, if the Brown Shirts ever came to power, the church would fall upon evil days. At first it seemed as though this gloomy prognostication were unwarranted. The church was, in effect, told to go its own way and neither the party nor the government would molest it. And, except for certain long-postponed readjustments in the relation of the church to the state, no overt attempts were made to damage the Christian cause. It was supposed that the anti-Christian Nazi radicals could be kept under control.

Even today there are many Christians who jump to defend the regime against charges of plotting strangulation of the church and liquidation of Christianity. In other words they not only brand the NRK Program as a forgery, but they refuse to admit that it accurately reflects the intentions of the men who now possess absolute power over German internal affairs. But the author—or forger—of the NRK Program unerringly put his finger on the three aspects of Christianity which radical Nazism clearly aims to deal with in summary fashion. These aspects may be described loosely as psychological, philosophical, and financial. Like the three sides of



an equilateral triangle they are, each in its own way, equally important.

From the psychological viewpoint of the Nazis, the Christian religion in its origin and organization is foreign to Germanic nature. The church is an alien growth in the German body politic. Its inevitable connections with worldwide Christendom lead, first, to the insinuation of foreign influences within the Reich, and secondly, to a dissipation of purely German spiritual energies in non-German interests. Consequently, the church is an obstacle to complete national solidarity and, even in its dormant and apparently harmless state, exercises a noxious influence upon Nordic character. As an agent of dissension and a competitor for the loyalty of the people it cannot be tolerated, unsubordinated and unassimilated, in a totalitarian state.

The key to the difficulty rests in the fact that Christianity is not the product of the German psyche and does not correspond to what is believed to be the German way of doing things. According to the Nazi interpretation of history, the Christian religion in the form of Roman Catholicism was "forced upon" the German nation in that "year of bad luck" 800 A. D. by Charlemagne who, as has been said, made himself a renegade to his people by—in the words of the Hebrew prophets—"running after alien gods." The fact that, by a typical twist of logic, Charlemagne's submission to Roman ecclesiastical authority for the sake of his imperial crown has been reinterpreted by the Nazis as an offering on the altar of European unity, need not, in view of Hitler's present effort to consolidate the continent, disturb us. Suffice it to say that Hitler has no intention of repeating Charlemagne's "gesture" despite the reopening of Russian churches under German auspices.

Charlemagne's betrayal was redeemed by Martin Luther who recalled his fellow Germans not to their true duty to God but to their true mission as a German people. "Luther's inner struggle in the cloister cell at Erfurt," said Reich Dramaturgist Dr. Rainer Schloesser in speaking to the Cultural Convention of Hitler Youth in Erfurt last spring, "was

the awaking of the German spirit. The power was generated in him here to wrest Germany from the thousand-year-old grip of the Roman spirit."

From this quotation it is evident that Luther, too, is to occupy a new niche in German history and, judging by the fact that he is rarely mentioned at all, that niche will not be very large. The contributions which the great German religious leaders of the Reformation made to Christendom are being blacked out in favor of a purely nationalistic reinterpretation of their lives and work. Like Charlemagne, they too used the Christian religion as a vehicle for their ambitious love for Germany because they did not know any better. Their great piety may be attributed to a healthy aversion to foreign domination, whether political or spiritual. "The fate of the Reich and of the nation," declared an article on German political unity in *Das Reich* last January, "stands so much in the forefront today that it is no longer possible to estimate religious events, the Reformation and the counter-Reformation, primarily from the standpoint of church history."

The upshot of this new historiography is that Luther is now acclaimed—but not loudly—as the liberator of the State from the Church (sic) and that the protest of his followers was directed solely against the temporal power of the Roman Church. The most exotic product of this new line of thought is the idea that Germany would have been much better off if Luther had never lived. When I asked the man who made this startling statement what he meant, he said, "Then the Roman Church would have gone on getting more and more corrupt until we would have cleared it out completely at one sweep. Luther started the Reformation too soon and split the country so that we are now part Protestant, part Catholic!"

In short, the party and the regime are industriously trying to avoid, unless it is unavoidable, all ascription of significance to the governing influence of Christianity during the larger part of a millennium of German history. On the other hand, no compunction is felt about exploiting every opportunity

which can be used to shoulder the church with some real or imaginary responsibility in bringing misfortune upon the nation or diverting it from the true course of its destiny. From these premises the anti-church elements of the party proceed to that conclusion which the NRK Program, whether authentic or not, foreshadows: namely, the elimination of the Christian religion and the church from exercising further its malign influence on the natural development of the German nation. The enervating cancer must be cut out so that the body politic may be rid of its parasite and recover its health and wholesomeness.

From their philosophical viewpoint (*Weltanschauung*), the Nazis regard the Christian faith and its standard of values as foreign to the German genius. If the Nietzschean system of thought, which undoubtedly has had a tremendous effect upon the modern German mind, is assumed to be representative of German genius, the Nazi contention is probably correct. One cannot help feeling, however, that a prejudiced finger has been laid upon the scales in which Christian values have been weighed with "old German values" and found wanting. This finger is a sense of resentment that Germany had no part in the original establishment of Christian standards. Whereas the source of the alien element in the Christian church as an organization is fixed in Rome, the source of the alien element in the Christian ethic is traced to Jerusalem. While the papal connection might, for the sake of Axis diplomacy, be condoned and the Roman Catholic talent for organization be secretly admired, no redeeming feature is to be discovered in the Sermon preached on a Palestinian Mount instead of in the Odenwald. By dint of Herculean labor on the part of Nazi scholars the center of gravity of European history and culture has been moved from the sunny shores of the Mediterranean to the dark forests of Germany (from which, as we have indicated, Greece and Rome were subsequently fertilized); but not yet has any German scholar succeeded in shifting the geographical center of Christian history from Jerusalem even to Rome or Vienna, to say nothing of Berlin which, until the

time of Frederick the Great, was a provincial capital of scarcely more importance than was the original Slavic fishing village which once occupied the same site on the banks of the Spree.

Attempts were made to establish the Aryan ancestry of Jesus, but they failed because an Aryanized Christ was of no particular interest to Nazis who had Hitler and because the Germans who were sincere Christians did not care whether Jesus was Aryan or not. Besides, almost the only evidence of possible Aryan ancestry was to be found in the medieval paintings in which Jesus was, for some mysterious reason, depicted with flaxen hair and blue eyes.

[The real secret of Nazi objection to Christianity does not rest with these specious contentions but with differences of outlook which are far more important. The Christian doctrine of brotherly love, forbearance, forgiveness, humility, and charity does not consort well with National Socialist ambitions. The *Judenfibel* (Jew Primer) used in Nazi schools states baldly, "The teaching of mercy and love of one's neighbor is foreign to the German race and the Sermon on the Mount is, according to Nordic sentiment, an ethic for cowards and idiots." Therefore the standards of ancient German tribes have been dusted off and re-established as the norm of conduct. The code of those early tribes—who, it is said by Himmler's historians, had reached in 4000 B. C. a stage of civilization equal or superior to that of their Egyptian contemporaries and to whom must go the sole, if indirect, credit for the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome—is summed up in series of masculine words including honor, courage, fortitude, destiny, life affirmation, clan loyalty, and the like. All feminine virtues are comprehended in the virtue of mother love. It is contended that as long as these concepts prevailed the German people were sound and strong, but the imposition of alien, oriental values robbed the tribes of their rude vigor and rugged independence, paving the way for foreign meddling and internecine strife.

Since the Christian ethic, which Nietzsche termed a "slave morality," played no part in ancient German culture, there is no good reason why it should continue to bind and fetter German genius now with its un-German standards. Therefore the NRK Program quite correctly echoes the desire of many a modern Siegfried to see the Bible dethroned, its publication and importation proscribed on pain of heavy penalty; the clergy—which is as parasitic, they say, as the religion—abolished; Christian ceremonies, which have no place in German folk lore, read out of the calendar; Christian prejudices in the matter of marriage sanctions overridden; and the Cross replaced by the swastika as the symbol of German faith. "Today the symbol of organic German verity," says Alfred Rosenberg, "is unquestionably the black swastika."

From the financial viewpoint—never a minor matter in Nazi eyes—the Christian church, like the Jews, has lived and grown fat at the expense of the hard-working German people. In the course of centuries it has insidiously gained possession of valuable urban properties and extensive land holdings which—from the standpoint of Nazi economists—are unproductive of crops and babies. Furthermore, it holds title, not only to excellent schools and hospitals and charitable institutions, but to many of the most classic examples of German architectural genius, as well as to large collections of the best German art and letters.

In the stout German heart beating under the Brown Shirt there is an increasing conviction that this vast treasure which represents a substantial portion of the accumulated wealth of the nation should be "restored" to the People to whom it properly belongs. By a curious and not unprofitable twist of reasoning the conclusion has been reached that the holdings of the church—which is a state-church—would revert to "public ownership" if they were to be handed over to the National Socialist regime, that is, the Nazi party. What is really meant is that ecclesiastical property constitutes the largest, virtually unexploited, gold mine in the country. So long as it remains outside the political control and

disposition of the party it does not contribute directly to the support of the Hitler regime. In 1937, *Das Schwarze Korps*, the SS weekly, had this to say about the question of real estate: "We shall not be able to avoid one day the painful task of declaring to whom this so-called church property rightly belongs. These properties came into existence through the common efforts of all citizens and at a time when church and state were a unity. Such communal goods ought not now suddenly to become the legal property of churches which have nothing but the name in common with the former conception of churches."

A very small beginning has been made in the confiscation of certain state-church properties and the suppression of the small free churches whose assets went to swell the coffers, not of the nation, but of the Gestapo and the SS. Furthermore, these measures were taken without the slightest pretension that they were made necessary by the exigencies of war, but it was equally obvious that the war provided a fine soundproof screen behind which the Gestapo could hide.

The resources of all liquidated political parties, the entire wealth of all the Jews, and even the public and private plundering of occupied countries have merely served, each in its turn, to keep the sheriff and the wolf from the government's door. The fabled riches of the Indies would be insufficient to assuage the avaricious hunger of this new race of opportunists who have hypnotized themselves with the thought that they are the "have-nots" who have been cheated of their birthright as sons and heirs of the universe. As the costs of war are high and there are millions of soldiers and their families to be indemnified for wartime sacrifices, the property of the church would provide at least a stopgap until the inheritance has been secured.

Consequently there is a real basis in fact to the NRK provisions for presenting all confiscated church property to the state as a token of the complete fusion of the new church with the state. It is said that the buildings of historic value and interest will be preserved in their present condition as monuments to a "certain stage" of German culture. It is

implied that landholdings will revert to the honest German farmer who has the right to cultivate German soil. No suggestions are forthcoming as to the eventual disposition of the odds and ends of church-related wealth, but it may safely be assumed that plenty of secular scavengers would appear. Nor is anything said about the abolition of church taxes which, if the Nazis run true to style, will once more be made obligatory and their proceeds diverted to the support of a new "church" in which membership will, of course, be "voluntary."

## CHAPTER IV

### *Who Is the Nazi God?*

THE ONLY direct reference to God in the Thirty Points of the NRK Program is contained in Point 9 which states bluntly, "In the NRK all Germans are to acknowledge God and His eternal works."

Taken by itself this declaration represents exactly the official standpoint of the National Socialist party which insists that all its members believe in "God." Atheism, we have said before, is frowned upon because godlessness is associated in the German mind with anarchy and Bolshevism. Hitler himself has insisted upon the retention of a theistic faith for two reasons, firstly, because of his own superstitious mysticism and secondly, because of his belief that the common people require the moral support of religion in their lives. "The great masses of a people," he says in *Mein Kampf*, "do not consist of philosophers, and it is just for them that faith is frequently the sole basis of a moral view of life. The various substitutes have not proved so useful in their success that one would be able to see in them a useful exchange for the former religious creeds."<sup>1</sup>

In the second sentence even Hitler reveals that he has given some thought to the question of an ersatz for Christianity. Other leading Nazis have long since abandoned any pretence of believing in the Christian God and launched out unreservedly on spiritual expeditions after other gods. The result has been a profusion and a confusion of diets, all of whom—under the Hitlerian concept of freedom of religion—are now vying for ultimate elevation to the post of Supreme Being in the Third Reich. Christianity, although still entered in the Party Platform of 1920, as the accepted religion of the Nazis, is virtually out of the running today for the reason that it and National Socialism failed in their

<sup>1</sup>*Mein Kampf*, Chap. X, p. 365.



efforts to convert each other. If there was still a lingering hope that Christianity could be Nazified or Nazism be Christianized, the war has put an end to it.

A few months after Hitler came to power, Rudolph Hess, as deputy leader of the party, ordained that party members need not subscribe to any particular religious confession, in other words, they need not belong to any of the recognized churches. This occurred at a time when the new regime was endeavoring to kidnap the whole church into the Nazi State by peaceful "co-ordination." Despite a professed desire to avoid stirring up religious animosities, full freedom and even the governmental blessing were extended to a multitude of pagan cults which inaugurated a series of vicious attacks that the church was not permitted to fend off. As a last straw, the violently hostile Alfred Rosenberg with his new religion of blood and soil was appointed by Hitler in 1934 to be ideological and philosophical supervisor of the party which presumably stood on the foundation of "Positive Christianity."

From these few instances of conflicting tendencies and actions it becomes abundantly clear that neither Hitler nor National Socialism had any appreciation of the spiritual and religious problems which had to be solved before a "co-ordinated" state-church could take its place beside the "synchronized" universities, the "united" labor unions, and similar institutions. The highest concept of religion was that it should serve the purposes of the Nazi State. It did not matter what theological furbelows might be pinned on the idea of God: He must work in and for the Third Reich. If Hitler could have obtained the undivided allegiance of the Christian church in Germany, all other sects and cults would unquestionably have been liquidated. On the other hand, Christianity would long since have been liquidated if any other rival had grown strong enough to take its place.

Today the name "Gott" in Germany is an empty word into which any concept can be poured. The polite references to God in the public speeches of Nazi leaders are, for the most part, a cynical concession to the credulity of the masses,

not unlike the pious pretensions made by politicians everywhere the world over, except perhaps in Russia where, it may be assumed, the name had been stricken from the vocabulary. Ordinarily, for example, the name of Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels—despite his Jesuit education—is not associated with religious things. Yet, listen to him:

The Eternal Power which rules over us is called the Almighty or God or Destiny or the Good Father who—as the final chorus of the Ninth Symphony puts it—must dwell above the tent of stars: we pray this Almighty One to preserve to us our Leader, to give him power and blessing, to increase and multiply his work, to fortify us in faith, to bestow upon us constancy of heart and strength of soul, and to grant to our people after struggle and sacrifice the victory in order to fulfill the day which we brought to its dawning.

Dr. Goebbels is a spellbinder even though he does not mean a thing he says. This prayer, however, is quoted not so much for its literary as for its religious style. It was offered publicly by the Minister of Propaganda on Hitler's last birthday, and is a very accurate indication of relative positions now occupied by God and Hitler in the Third Reich. Altogether no one is quite sure who or what is meant when God's name is mentioned, except that he works for the Third Reich, and a prominent place is reserved for him at the conclusion of important speeches.

Jacob Wilhelm Hauer—his first name is rarely heard—has declared unreservedly that God must be a German God or Germans cannot worship him. This is the essence of the "German Faith" movement in which Hauer, who was a Christian missionary, is a leading spirit. His theological training leads him to define his attitude systematically. "If the conviction that there is only one road to truth and one way to God constitutes an inalienable characteristic of Christianity, then Christianity is basically opposed to the German genius. We are faced with a choice between an alien and a German faith. The German nature itself will decide the issue."

It is hard to say whether Goebbels got his idea of God from, or gave it to, Rosenberg, Hauer, and the anonymous author of Germany's new textbook on religion *Gott und Volk*, which was published about a year earlier and distributed free to soldiers in editions totaling 250,000 copies. It is inconceivable that this latter book was thus published and spread throughout the army without the knowledge and permission of the government. It could not be bought in any bookstore, and so it was evidently intended to influence only the military. The Catholic bishops echoed their alarm in their public protest on June 23, 1941, against "the many forces at work to dissolve the blessed relation between Christ and the German people." The book is specifically mentioned, though not by name, in order to give point to the protest without helping to advertise the volume.

The author begins by stating that heretics always have the profoundest faith. He wants his readers to peruse the book with their hearts, not with their minds, and see whether they do not already carry the new faith in themselves. He describes the bitter reaction of the last war's defeat and goes on to say, "In that hour, wherein we began to hate, love was born. Not a lukewarm, halfway love, such as is preached in church, but the hot, blind love toward Germany which knows no boundaries and no reservations. It does not matter whether the Final Thing is called God, Light, Providence, or the Source of Power. The essential thing is that we do not say Judah, not even Rome, but Germany!"

It will be noted that this fits in with what was said in the last chapter about the German's sensitivity to the fact that he can lay no geographical claim to the birthplace of Christianity.

Chapter IV of *Gott und Volk* is devoted to a discussion of God. No doubt is left in the mind of the reader that the God of the new German religion is not the Christian God. "What kind of a God is it who let humanity live for hundreds of thousands of years without Jesus and then orders Ten Commandments to be observed which are self-

evident to any halfway decent person, and who after two thousand years must be taught that he has forgotten the most important thing of all, namely, "Thou must maintain the purity of thy blood!" This God is not the true God."

Who is the true God of the new Nazi religion? Dr. Goebbels does not settle the question, but the author of *Gott und Volk* feels no hesitation in confessing faith in "a strong God, the God of Power," not the God of love. And this God is to be worshipped not in churches but in "Ancestral Halls" and "Courts of Honor." "We won't tear down the cathedrals. We will fill them with a new spirit and in them a new faith will be proclaimed. The suffering, sorrow-torn face of the crucified one will disappear. Our heroes must once more carry swords in their fists instead of crosses on their backs."

Dr. Goebbels came closer to approving the worship of this kind of God when in the full flush of an easy Polish victory he spoke to the nation on New Year's Eve in 1939 and concluded his speech with the most flagrant demonstration of uncalled-for irreverence that any ranking Nazi leader has publicly displayed. After reviewing the triumphs of the past year, he simply declared that Germany was willing to help herself in order to make it easier for God to grant His Grace, but—"in the words of a Prussian general, if God cannot or will not help us, let Him refrain from aiding our cursed enemies."

The question still remains: who is the Nazi God? There is every indication that for a certain number of Germans God resides in the "blood of the Nordic Aryan," or "the soil of the nation" (both of these ideas are peculiar to Rosenberg), or "the spirit of the German People" (Wilhelm Hauer), or even in Hitler himself. Despite the fact that these candidates for divinity exercise a powerful mystical influence over a certain number of supercharged Nazis, time has shown that such pseudo-religious fabrications will not satisfactorily take the place of the old God. Even the most apostate Christian feels instinctively that these gods represent a retreat rather than an advance in man's religious evolution.

For the same reason the cult of the old Germanic gods of saga and legend will hardly extend itself beyond the small circle of Ludendorff's followers—never more than 75,000—whose atavistic impulses drive them back to pre-historic mythology as it has been glorified by Richard Wagner. These devotees of the Wotan cult have not even awaked to the fact that *The Ring of the Nibelungen* closes with "The Twilight of the Gods" or that the Fuehrer himself prefers *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* which eulogizes the genius of Hans Sachs, the archetype of virtuous German craftsmen.

The whole development of religion in the Third Reich is away from these first clumsy efforts to give spiritual content to the Nazi revolution by reverting to "blood and soil" or the Nordic gods. The attempt to locate God in the genius of the German Volk as typified by Hitler has not, however, been surrendered. The Nazi ideologist possesses too much German tenacity and thoroughness to abandon his religious experiments until a satisfactory synthesis of church and state has been reached.

"God is not entirely in the blood, He is not entirely in the earth, He is not entirely in the Volk, but these are the mouthpieces through which He speaks to us." That is the dictum of a young Nazi, Martin Hieronimi, author of *Junger Deutscher vor Gott* which was published in 1939. This small volume of critical letters written to typical Catholics, Protestants, German Faith devotees, skeptics, atheists, Hitler Youths, and so forth, is one of the very few serious and sincere efforts on the part of a Nazi to get at the core of reality in religion. From a strictly theological point of view it was bound to be naïve and superficial, but it is so honest in its purpose that Professor Paul Althaus, one of Germany's leading Protestant theologians, devoted two full lectures to it at the Luther Akademie in 1940.

The young author states the basic religious issue in the Third Reich in these words: "The most fateful question of our times is whether the political revolution was in reality a religious revolution or whether the religious revolution which is growing ever stronger is actually only a political

revolution." He believes that this is the first issue to be settled. Therefore, he says, "We repudiate all ersatz faiths because they seem to us too hasty and because we want to wait until the time is ripe."

Owing to the outbreak of war, the time has ripened more quickly than Herr Hieronimi anticipated. As we have seen, a substitute for orthodox Christian services had to be found and, besides, the left-wing Nazis were taking over power and making their impatience felt. But, as the author foresaw, the question about the nature of God—despite its urgency—is not one which can be decided quickly.

Three things are pressing the Nazi leadership toward a definitive settlement of the question: Who is our God? The first is the Nazi passion for "co-ordinating" which is based on the well-known German love of order and discipline. Graf Keyserling, who wrote *America Set Free*, recently published an essay on "Religion and Theology" in which he takes a close look at his fellow countrymen: "The majority of Germans . . . will in the final analysis always profess some kind of theology, because they cannot tolerate not receiving definite, precise, and final answers to all questions. Hence the grimly unwavering faith of Germans in systems and the value of systems."<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, there is a military reason for haste in preparing a definition of the God who is believed to be behind Hitler in his crusade for a new world order. All types and kinds of men have been thrown together in the German Army which has beaten down almost all the nations of Europe from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea. These men include Christians of all complexions, atheists, and "God-believers." They have seen a great deal of war and death. Some of them never wanted to take up arms and others will never want to lay them down. One group inevitably affects the other. The Propaganda Ministry, to be sure, is very proud of the fact that of any four men in a bunker, one may be a pastor, the next a "consistorial official," the next a "Gottgläubig" doctor, and the last a customs officer whom the others called

<sup>2</sup> *Betrachtungen der Stille und Besinnlichkeit*, Jena, 1941

"what's-left-of-a-Christian." In an editorial on the subject, *Das Reich* unctuously says, "The fact that everyone regardless of his religious confession confronts death for his nation in a worthy manner indicates that we are no longer abandoning our common earth for the sake of mansions in heaven."

However, someone should tell Dr. Goebbels that many of these men who are now confronting death in this "worthy manner" will return to confront life in the same manner after the war is over. From my own conversations with German soldiers I know that National Socialism is not going to satisfy their spiritual needs when the time comes to reconstruct their shattered lives. Aside from the ironic fact that many of those soldiers *are* abandoning their common earth for Hitler's sake, the conclusions which that article draws as to the reasons why the men are fighting may well be questioned, especially under a regime which sentences conscientious objectors to death. In 1940 boys who refused to fight were dying in Ploetzensee Prison near Berlin at the rate of one per week. Such deaths are kept secret and no one knows how many C. O.'s have died for refusing to bear arms. It is one of the characteristics of the Nazi God that he does not inspire Germans to object to military service.

*Das Reich*, however, does not deny that serious religious discussions take place in the barracks and at the battle stations. In fact, the paper hastens to add that no other army in the world can match the quantity and quality of these religious debates. A few months later the same paper<sup>3</sup>, which is the closest equivalent in Germany to our Sunday editions, published an article which throws a strong light not only on the sober wrestlings of soldiers with spiritual forces but on the present temper of young Germans who are caught in the no man's land between the old religion and the new. The article, which is in the form of a dialogue between two

<sup>3</sup> It is hardly necessary to apologize for quoting the same paper so often because it is virtually the only source of published material on what might be called religious themes in Germany today. There are no religious periodicals left in Germany and all other papers and magazines either studiously avoid religion or spend their time reviling Christianity.

soldiers, commences with remarks on their increasing awareness of God's proximity and the inability of philosophy to account for this sense of God's presence. The conversation proceeds as follows:

The one: And you think that for us today wrestling with God is a thing of the past?

The other: No, because I hold it to be impossible for a wideawake person ever to finish with this wrestling. But we start our quest from entirely different premises. I don't know how to describe it. God is once more right here. We can't get around Him at all. We no longer dream of trying to justify God versus the world's "disorder." It doesn't enter our minds that God would be struck by that Fate before which we are placed. No, God is in Fate; one can almost say, God is Fate. But that is almost theology and that is exactly the peculiarity of our conviction about God, namely, that we are greatly at a loss when we try to seize God in a system of thought. Hence the uncertainty in the various discussions about a "world-view" or rather "God-view."

The one: That too is confirmed by modern philosophical speculation: God has disappeared from the philosophical thinking of our time. We don't talk about Him, and we don't quarrel about Him. Yet an almost insolent certainty accompanies all our questions and words: "He" is present. And, if, step by step, we honestly pursue our work, one day we'll stand before "Him." I don't believe in the much-lamented godlessness of our modern philosophy any more, in spite of or rather because of the fact that it doesn't talk about God.

The other: I have the same feeling. Just because we can't force ourselves to shut God up in our patchwork thought-system, He is more certainly present. If I could demonstrate God, then He would somehow be "my" God, about whom I have procured a personal conviction and, possibly, the God of those who accept my demonstration. Our stand before God is of a different nature. God is again "the Power" which can break the nations in pieces. We don't know "my" or "thy" God, but the God of our common destiny. In a larger sense He is the God of the people, not the patriotic God of the Germans who stands always on our side, but the great God who is the Fate of nations and who can test the very blood of man with



terrible inflictions. Yet, even when he inflicts a heavy, incomprehensible fate upon the individual, He remains the God of the nation. Each affliction which strikes the individual strikes him either within the people or, symbolically, as the representative of the people; after the end of the individual, fate can become fruitful.

The one: This trust in the fruitfulness of fate seems to me to be the essential thing. We can experience God as Destiny because we are instinctively convinced that Destiny can never be senseless, even if we don't perceive its sense: that Destiny is somehow always "Providence."

The other: That's what I meant. Destiny is that which is always foreseen and therefore an appeal to stand fast. And that seems to me to be the decisive indication of the authenticity of our knowledge about God, that nothing marks our era so much as the fanatical will to stand fast before Destiny. "We can only pray Providence that it continue to abide by our beginnings. What can be done by us, will be done."

The reader may be left to his own interpretations of this typical *mélange* of sophisticated insights and naïve prejudices which, of course, proceeds to a happy (Nazi) ending. It is worth considerable study, not only as a bona fide expression of the spiritual confusion which boils like a dark, stormy night in the cauldron of the German soul but as a rare example—very rare—of a public lifting of the lid which is usually screwed down like the top on a pressure cooker. The article, furthermore, provides an excellent illustration of the urgent and obvious necessity of doing something to settle the questions about the nature of the Nazi deity as soon as possible. It is an inadvertent admission of the failure of National Socialism to satisfy its spoon-fed people with an adequate spiritual substitute for Christianity.

Allied with the inner German urge for a clarification of all issues and the urgency of military necessity is another and more practical reason for trying to define the Nazi idea of God. This may be called pedagogical. Substance, or the illusion of substance, must be infused into the combination of mystic vapoing, pompous platitude, and utilitarian exploitation to which the Almighty, or Providence, or

Destiny has been subjected, if the new faith is to survive the reality of war and be transmitted to succeeding generations. The history of almost every religion and ideology clearly shows that indoctrination supersedes revelation and dogma supplants doctrine beginning with the second generation of believers. Nazism will prove to be no exception to this rule and the leaders realize it.

One guarantee of proper training worked out by the party is to take hand-picked boys of twelve years and remove them from their homes to special Adolf Hitler Schools for a six-year course to educate them as political leaders. The first class graduated one year ahead of schedule in April, 1942. Just what sort of "religious" instruction the picked youths of these schools receive is not fully known despite the publicity given to the model curriculum, but SA Brigade Leader Julius Goerlitz in an interview given to Edwin Shanke of The Associated Press regarding the Hitler School at Starnberg in Bavaria had this to say: "There is no special religious instruction in our schools. Every course is religious. Our boys are brought up to believe in God. But the religious conception is bigger than that of Christ. It is love of family, the community, people, and nature. We tell the boy, 'You have God in you—in your breast—and the way you live and do business is all that is important.' Christian learning is not deep enough. Concepts of moral behavior were formulated long before Christ."

Kreisleiter Dr. Fritsch of Freiburg, however, was much more specific regarding the religious ideal for the Hitler Youth. At an End-of-the-year-Service (Jahresschlussfeier) of the party in Freiburg on December 30, 1937, he read a telegram addressed to the Gauleiter by leading churchmen of the district complaining that he, Fritsch, had made a public speech in the course of which he had called the Old Testament a "swindle." "Now as always," stated Dr. Fritsch, "I take the position that the Old Testament cannot in any way be used in the upbringing of the National Socialist youth of the New Germany. Our growing youth needs an education of Nordic breeding, of courage and bravery. There are millions of men in Germany who derive their spiritual

and moral support from the work of the Fuehrer and of Alfred Rosenberg. As long as the church in its unheard-of fashion agitates against the work of Reich Leader Rosenberg and dirties it, we have the right to defend ourselves. *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (Rosenberg's book) is our confession of faith."

The program of the Adolf Hitler Schools states that the "science of race and religion" together with German language, history, geography, and "view of the world," constitute the core of the general schooling which, lumped together, is called "Volkskunde," literally "Peopleology," and concentrates on Nazi biological and historical theories. More revealing is the announcement that the first of the special textbooks written for these Nazi honor schools is called *Sparta* or *The Life Struggle of a Nordic Governing Class* (*Lebenskampf einer nordischen Herrenschaft*). This book, which I have never seen, was the first of a series of texts to be written by teachers in the Hitler Schools or by instructors in the Teacher's College which has now been founded to train faculties for the special schools. The trend of the times is to hasten the day when Nazi ideology in its purest form will dominate the entire German educational system with the eventual purpose, as I was told by an army officer, of supplanting the Catholic and Protestant faculties of theology in the universities. The New Youth will be taught to believe in God but the answer to the question "Who is God?" is still missing.

What about the "Gottgläubig"—those who have registered themselves as believing in God, but who refuse to identify themselves with the church? Unfortunately, that term—like Gott—has never been adequately defined, but some notion of what it means may be derived from an article printed in *Das Reich* on September 29, 1940, which states that in the last census a large number of people<sup>4</sup> made use of the

<sup>4</sup> For statistics see Chapter I. Almost one quarter of the "God-believers" live in the three big cities of Berlin, Hamburg, and Vienna, which have 10.2, 7.5, and 6.4 per cent respectively. Thuringia has 5.8, Brunswick 5.5, Saxony 5.3, Steiermark 4.9 per cent. Weakest are the provinces of the

designation *Gottgläubig* which appeared for the first time alongside the terms Catholic, Protestant, and the like. Formerly, the article adds, those persons who did not belong to the church were called "Freethinkers," by which term it was generally understood that they rejected all religious sentiments. The Reich Ministry of the Interior has now recommended the use of this new designation because responsible officers felt that the term "atheistic" (*glaubenlos*) did not accurately describe the position of Germans who merely wished to resign from the church.

The article goes on to say that this content of the concept has now been strengthened by the action of the party authorities in forbidding Jews who are not members of Jewish religious organizations to call themselves *Gottgläubig*. The last few sentences drawn from *Die N. S. Korrespondenz*, an official party organ, are worth exact quotation. "This designation corresponds to the characteristic piety of the German and people of similar blood. Accordingly, the designation "god-believing" which heretofore carried no obligation is now placed under a certain protection; at least negatively, in that it is not admissible for Jews. On the positive side to be sure, a broad field of possible interpretations still remains to him who uses this characterization to describe himself. And, in that, perhaps, is expressed the desire to see the individual's religious attitude left wholly within the personal sphere."

This authoritative statement clearly shows that the word *Gottgläubig* is to be understood not so much in terms of what it means as in terms of what it does not mean. It does not apply to at least two categories of people who are "God-believing," namely, Christian church members and Jews. In short, it is intended to apply to rabid Nazis following

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Lower Danube 1.1, Bavaria 1.2, and East Prussia 1.3 per cent. The article comments upon the fact that agricultural districts cling most closely to the traditional faith and that the Steiermark, which is purely agricultural, shows a fairly high percentage only because the bitter Catholic opposition to National Socialism in Austria drove many people out of the Roman Church into the Protestant churches or into the ranks of the "God-believers."

the party line. Its advantages are twofold: the social stigma of atheism does not attach to persons who employ it and no church taxes have to be paid.

The "Break-through Publishers" who printed the little booklet on marriage also sponsored a brochure entitled *Gottgläubiges Volk*, or *The End of the Confessions*, by Heinz Knauth whose approach to the subject of religion was purely negative and destructive. "Christianity," he said, "is the remnant of an outdated and dying culture and it is, therefore, a major obstacle in the evolution of the New Millennium. It must be eliminated and in its place must come a belief in a non-confessional God whose essence rests in the state.

In short, this new designation—interesting as it may be—provides no real clue to a definition of God in the New Germany. Not even Rosenberg who is charged with the ideological supervision of the nation has attempted to explore all the implications of, let alone elaborate in detail upon, the elusive doctrines of what is evidently a new concept of God. For those who wish to get an insight into his ideas on the subject, the reading of *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* is suggested but not recommended. It contains no special contribution to a clear definition.

Aside from this very abstruse and, if one may dignify it with the term, philosophical excursion into the realm of religion, Nazi leaders confine their religious utterances to occasional pragmatic pronouncements and pompous platitudes which are thrown into their harangues for good measure. Take, for example, the statement which issued from Gauleiter Hans Schemm, speaking from a strongly Catholic province, "Deeds are more important than words. Whoever stammers prayers in the presence of a child drowning in a rapid stream has, in truth, less religion than he who without prayers dives to the rescue in the river."

Providing that the would-be rescuer is a good swimmer, no one can quarrel with the sentiment of Herr Schemm. His rather hackneyed illustration is no doubt intended to support the party policy of "Positive Christianity" with

which the Nazis hoped to take over Christianity, lock, stock, and barrel for their own propagandistic purposes. The aphorism was deemed good enough to be reprinted in the calendar of the Party Yearbook of 1940. But the Christian who hears these pearls of spiritual wisdom dropping from the lips of leading Brown Shirts has an uneasy feeling that such unsolicited admonitions are not well meant—not by men who themselves pause at the river's edge to ask whether the baby is blond, blue-eyed, and Aryan.

Reich Marshal Hermann Goering, judging by the fact that his daughter was baptized by the Nazi Reich Bishop, is still a member of the Christian church. His petitions to God—whether they mean anything or not—have a better ring than those of his colleagues, as may be seen from the conclusion of his address to the German people on Hitler's last birthday, April 20, 1942, "We implore the Almighty: protect our beloved Leader and bless his work!"

Dr. Ley, Chief of the German Workers' Front, in a speech to 18,000 workers at Leipzig, October, 24, 1937, puts it this way, "Our faith is the world-view of the Fuehrer. And because we possess this faith, we cannot have any other; for no man can serve two masters." He went on to say that "all German laborers must work with a will to achieve the goal set for them in the pure doctrine of Adolf Hitler, which is the gospel of the German *Volk*."

The general line followed by most Nazi orators is that which is given in the Nazi aphorism which is drilled into the youth: He who serves Germany serves God. This has been Hitler's own approach to religion, and those Nazis who would try to serve God first and Germany second are afraid that they might find themselves charged with treason. But, so far as the new idea of God is concerned, the Fuehrer has made only a few Delphic statements on the subject. This may account for the reticence of other high party leaders who, if they have any interest in God at all, do not care to trust themselves far into territory which is as yet uncharted by official party cartographer. Besides, to call upon God too

much would betray a woeful lack of confidence in Hitler. Thus religion is made very "practical."

It is Hitler who said on February 20, 1938, as he purged his generals and began to look greedily beyond his boundaries: "In such a critical period the man who acts in God's Name is not he who wanders lazily up and down the land with Bible verses, passing his days partly in doing nothing and partly in criticizing the deeds of others, but he who lends to his prayer its noblest form which binds a man with his God, namely, the form of work. Not even faith (i.e., religious faith) is exempted from the obligation to synchronize itself with the labor of those who are completing the salvation of a nation."

Since the beginning of the war, Hitler has taken to mentioning God (or god) with increasing frequency. In fact, some of his recent speeches have closed on a note which can only be called "prayerful." Perhaps it is not extraordinary that this remarkable dictator, bearing the heavy weight of relentless responsibility which he dare not share with other men, should at last become conscious of a very human and natural desire to rest in the grateful shade of some "rock that is higher." This does not imply that he is becoming humble—only that he may be newly conscious of another Power at work, which might destroy him.

The conclusion to his 1942 New Year Message to the German People struck many listeners with peculiar force. Two severe war winters had taken their toll of the nation's physical and spiritual resources. More comprehensively than anyone else, Hitler foresaw the exactions that a third and still more terrible winter with its war on two fronts would—and did—make. This is what he said:

The coming year will, therefore, make tremendous demands upon us. But both at the front and at home these will be met. At home our National Socialist commonwealth will—if necessary—make even the last sacrifice. . . .

At the turn of this year we can only pray to the Almighty that He may give strength to the German People and their

soldiers to endure with industry and brave hearts what is requisite for the procurement of our freedom and future.

If we all, in common fidelity, do our duty, destiny will fulfill itself even as Providence has ordained. He who is fighting for the life of his people, their daily bread, and their future will triumph! But he who with his Jewish hate is trying to destroy the nations in this war will fall!

May the year 1942—and to this end let us all pray to the Lord God—bring a decision for the salvation of our nation, and the nations allied to us!

At the end of the same month, on the anniversary of his coming to power, Hitler spoke as usual to a great crowd gathered in the Berlin Sport Palace. Again he called upon God in a manner reminiscent of the first World War slogan, "Gott strafe England!" (God punish England). After defining the war as a struggle between the "haves" who could not settle their internal problems and the "have-nots" whose success within their own borders is coveted by the "haves," he proceeds arrogantly to challenge God's righteousness in a way which Goebbels must have approved:

Now we shall see to whom Providence will give the prize of victory in this war! Whether to him who has everything and wants to take away from him who has almost nothing even that last which he owns, or to him who is defending that last which he can call his own? And if a British Archbishop (Dr. Cosmo Lang) prays to God that He send Bolshevism over Germany and over Europe for a punishment, I can only say that it won't come over Germany. Whether it won't strike England is another matter. Then let the old sinner and blasphemer begin to try to cast out this danger by prayer! . . .

The prayer of this diabolical priest, who wishes to have Europe punished through Bolshevism, will not be fulfilled, but another prayer will be answered: Lord God, give us strength to procure freedom for the nation, our children, and our children's children, and not only for our German folk but for the other nations of Europe. For this is not a war which we this time are waging for our German People only, but it is a struggle for all of Europe and, therefore, for the whole of civilized humanity!



These few sentences open a fertile field for conjecture as to Hitler's idea of God. Does he believe in a personal God who is on his side or doesn't he? It would not be surprising if he himself did not know the answer to that question. Apparently he feels that his enormous power over the destinies of nations wells up out of some spring that is deeper than himself and he is at a loss to know what attitude he should take toward this *mysterium tremendum*. Obviously, none of the coherent religious systems appeals to him. There has been some talk to the effect that he is very superstitious and that he consults clairvoyants, but it is doubtful that these rumors, even if true, adequately explain his theology. His religion is Germany or rather his idealized vision of Germany, to which he is ready to sacrifice both himself and the German people. He is probably the only high-ranking personage in the government who feels this way about the country; the religion of all the others is Hitler himself, or the Nazi party, or their own inordinate appetite for power. Nine-tenths of his top men may be put in the latter category. Men like Goebbels, Ribbentrop, Himmler, and so on, will serve any god who, in turn, serves their purpose.

Because his pure love of an etherialized, nonexistent Germany is so intense and self-immolating, Hitler's practical religion issues in an insane hatred for all of Germany's "enemies." It is at this juncture that he takes abrupt leave of Christianity and plunges down the dark road to an idol which he himself cannot clearly see. He seems to entertain a childlike hope that his "God" can see the end of the road and attain it. That is why his names for God are limited to "The Foreseer" (die Vorsehung) and "The Almighty." But he must know that he cannot fully share this dark faith with his fellow-countrymen, not even with all of his immediate colleagues. Ordinary mortals require something more tangible. Therefore, he finds himself unable to solve the key problem which, being spiritual, would go a long way toward solving all the other unanswered questions regarding the future.

His followers, meanwhile, are engaged in a triangular tug-

of-war: back to the traditional Christian idea of God, on toward a new non-Christian, or quasi-Christian, mystical, impersonal Providence, and, thirdly, away from all faith in anyone or anything save the Nazi State and its Leader. This state of affairs is intolerable. One of the latter two positions may be expected to produce the final Nazi attempt to "co-ordinate" the German soul. If, as seems probable, the government falls completely into the hands of the ascendant radicals—Himmler, Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Schirach, Rosenberg—the third position will undoubtedly prevail. Then there will be in Central Europe such a religion of the state as is not recorded by world history even in its chapters on Old Rome or New Russia. The old Incas perhaps will have come closest to it.

## CHAPTER V

### *Religion As a Political Instrument*

REGARDLESS of temporary Nazi uncertainty as to the nature of Hitler's God, it is evident that the star of a new religion has risen in the Third Reich under the auspices of the party and, with full official backing, is in the process of usurping Christianity's place. Were it not for the firm hand of the regime in suppressing and restricting the defense of the old faith, Germany might long since have been caught in the throes of a violent religious war which would undoubtedly have annihilated the Nazi movement and exploded Rosenberg's "myth" of the twentieth century. Indeed, the danger of a religious war will not be banned until Hitlerism has been completely discredited, because, as Martin Hieronimi says, National Socialism has not publicly made up its mind as to whether it is primarily a political or a religious movement. Up till now the majority of Germans have been led to think of it as purely political with a tinge of the mystical, but the youth are being educated to believe in it as a religion.

Even if there were no question of a new religion, however, the danger of a religious war would still be acute. The center of contention would be—and, indeed, is—the control of all religious organizations within the Reich. For those who have had eyes to see and ears to hear, the benevolent intentions of the Nazi State with reference to the ultimate direction of spiritual affairs—whether Nazi or Christian—have been unequivocally clear. The basic principle of totalitarianism is to control every aspect of national life. It would, of course, have been much cheaper and easier for the new government to convert the established church to its purpose, thus acquiring intact not only the membership of the church and its real-estate holdings, but even that intangible quantum which businessmen buy and sell under the name "good will." This aspect of Nazi policy is plainly reflected in the

effort of the Quisling government in Norway to purchase ecclesiastical favor. So far the *Nasjonal Samling* has failed but has not yet given up hope, as the Nazi regime has done, of obtaining church support by a combination of blandishment and force. In fact, the whole long struggle for religious control in Germany is to be seen in miniature in Quisling's maneuvers and the resistance of Norwegian churchmen.

The confusion which, after nearly a decade of Nazism, still exists in the minds of Hitler's followers on the subject of religion could be found ludicrous if its implications were not so tragic. Half of the party members, when queried in the matter, cannot see why Christianity should not be able to "do business as usual" under the new government, whereas the other half defiantly or reluctantly state that the two faiths are incompatible and the Christianity must cede to National Socialism.

In the first year of the war, while on a trip to inspect war prisoner camps, I spent a couple hours in a blacked-out train compartment discussing Germany's future with two violently pro-Nazi army officers. In the course of conversation under the eerie blue light of a second-class coupé the officers revealed that they shared opinions on almost all questions which arose. They were reserve officers, at least 99 per cent pure Nazi. It was agreed that the outbreak of war was a shame and a pity. They maintained, however, that the existence of the Polish state constituted a standing danger to Germany's eastern flank. In reply to my further question, they also stated that the Czechoslovak state had likewise been a standing threat to the southeastern flank. I then asked them whether they also thought that Finland, which had just been invaded, constituted a standing threat to Russia's western flank, as the now frequently quoted Russian press maintained. Seeing the very invidious comparison the officers admitted that they couldn't quite understand the pact with the Soviets, but they were sure that papa Hitler knew best. It was evident that their faith was very busy trying to move a good-sized mountain. So much for their type of mind. But when I asked them whether they thought that Germany

could still make peace and be friends with England, one said, "Yes" and the other said, "Never." This rupture of solidarity startled them and they looked at each other in wild surmise.

When we started talking about the church question, they were still more discomfited at their own disagreement. Although they at first tried to hide smugly behind Hitler's assertion (January 31, 1939) that "everyone could seek salvation in his own fashion" (*Jeder kann nach seiner Fassung selig werden*), the one officer, when forced into a corner, admitted that the principles of Christianity were irreconcilable with the principles of National Socialism. Therefore, Christianity must die. He even went so far as to say that he believed National Socialism would eventually produce its own theological system just as any great faith has done, but that the people were not ready for it yet. The other officer saw no reason why the political philosophy and the religious faith should not continue to live together.

At the present time, therefore, it may be said that Germany is living under two religions. Although the party and the State are virtually indivisible, the party is out to destroy the religion which stands under the protection of the State. This paradox of the German state-church situation will be discussed later, because without an understanding of it any comprehension of Germany's religious problem is impossible.

Meanwhile, the state of affairs in the Third Reich is analogous to the categories of faith in Japan where, as I understand it, there is a relative and an absolute Shintoism. Relative Shintoism is a purely political form of patriotic nationalism which may be superimposed upon whatever religious faith—Buddhism, Christianity, and so on—the individual may profess. Absolute Shintoism, on the other hand, carries with it not only loyalty to the emperor as ruler, but faith in him as the Son of Heaven: in short, Shintoism is the religion. In this form, at least for the radical imperialists of Japan, Shintoism is seen as a doctrine of salvation for the whole world, whereby all the nations of the earth will be brought back to harmony and prosperity under the divine

sovereignty of the Tenno. No one has unveiled this ideological messianism of Japan more glaringly than the New York *Times'* capable correspondent, Otto D. Tolischus, who used to be in Berlin and was repatriated from Japan, after harrowing experiences, in August, 1942.

Mr. Tolischus in reporting on the philosophy of Professor Chikao Fujisawa, whom he dubs the Japanese Nietzsche, compares his writings with *Mein Kampf*.

According to this booklet, which was made up for widest distribution, Japan, as the original motherland of the human race and world civilization, is fighting a holy war to reunite warring mankind into one universal family household in which each nation will take its proper place under the divine sovereignty of the Japanese Emperor, who is a direct descendant of the Sun Goddess in the "absolute cosmic life-center," from which the nations have strayed and to which they must return.

Mr. Tolischus then gives excerpts from Professor Fujisawa's philosophy regarding the objective of Japan's divine mission on earth:

This is the objective of the divine mission that Japan has been called on to fulfill from time immemorial. In a word, it is to permeate the whole world and earth with the cosmic vitality embodied in our divine sovereign, so that all segregated national units may be led to reunite themselves spiritually with the sincere feeling of brothers sharing the same blood.

This is called "the way of the gods." Furthermore, Japan's partners share this mission to a limited extent.

It is noteworthy that the guiding principle of National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy have much in common with the Musubi principle, one of many distinguishing these Axis powers from the democracies and the Soviet Union. It is because of this spiritual solidarity that Japan, Germany, and Italy have been prompted to present a common front against those powers defending the old order.<sup>1</sup>

Without yielding to the temptation to speculate upon what would happen if the Axis won the war and the final battle

<sup>1</sup> The New York *Times*, August 13, 1942.

for world supremacy were left to German and Japanese Shintoism, a brief glance at history shows that the Shintoist type of religion offers nothing new. It has characterized to a greater or less degree every bellicose nation or clique within a nation which is only partially—or lopsidedly—civilized and whose people invest themselves with divinity to compensate for a certain lack of humanity. The imperial and godlike pretensions of Alexander, Augustus, and Napoleon immediately come to mind when history is reviewed to find a match for Hitler, but actually the only ancient states comparable to the New Germany in total regimentation were the Incan or Aztec, especially the Incan, where there was not only a startling parallel in strict internal control based on the “block leader” idea, subsidized marriage with the debt to be liquidated through bearing children, taxation by conscript labor for the state, exchange of mass populations, dictated educational aims, a controlled national economy, architectural megalomania, and the concept of a *Pax Peruviana*, but also in genuine emperor-worship only thinly disguised under the Cult of the Sun.

It is, of course, hard to believe that this sort of thing could happen in modern Germany where in so many respects the standard of Christian culture is unusually high. The only answer is that the German people, owing to their peculiar history—very similar to that of the Italians—are *politically* immature. In fact, their Republic failed because they were not ready for it; they tried to do in fifteen years what it took the United States 150 years to accomplish, namely, to develop citizens with a sense of direct personal responsibility for national and international affairs. We have seen statistics indicating that 95 per cent of the German people still register themselves as Christian church members. This high percentage, all other evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, may be taken to show that the German people are not *spiritually* immature, at least not more so than the people of any other so-called Christian land. Taken in conjunction with the fact that an additional 3.5 per cent

professedly believe in God, these figures imply, as we have said, that God enjoys in Germany a popular majority which even exceeds Hitler's. This bit of religious statistics contains political significance. Although many of the votes for Hitler may be discounted, it is obvious that a great many votes are being cast both for Hitler *and* God when at least a goodly proportion of them ought to be cast for Hitler *or* God. What is the reason for this? Are the German people fooling God, or fooling Hitler, or are they merely fooling themselves? The truth is that most of them have been—and still are—fooling themselves. That comes of their political immaturity. It was only the thoroughgoing Nazis and the thoroughgoing Christians who recognized the irreconcilable divergencies in their respective faiths and acted accordingly.

These thoroughgoers—on both sides—constitute a very small fraction of all Germans. After all, the religious issue has not yet been brought to a final showdown. I doubt if either side feels ready for a decision because, for different reasons, neither side feels that it is in a favorable position to win a decisive victory. The number of thoroughgoing Christians is impossible to estimate. It is, of course, only a fraction of the 95 per cent who still pay Protestant or Catholic church taxes. If they are to be restricted only to those who vote against Hitler, literally, the percentage is very small, not more than 5 or 6 per cent.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that, although members of the SS Elite Guard are required to sever their connection with the church, many party members—of whom there are approximately three million—still pay the church tax and register themselves as Christian. Among these are some who unsuccessfully but persistently have tried to find a common denominator in Christianity and National Socialism. If there are party members who still cling to the old faith, one can easily imagine the failure of anti-Christian Nazis to separate the broad mass of Germans from their church. Those who claim to have reconciled in their own lives a dual loyalty to Christ and Hitler are invariably the victims of superficial self-delusion; as has been said before,



either they worship one master and pay lip service to the other, or they have simply compartmentalized their inner spirits and naïvely divide their devotion in equal portions. For those who have given up trying to find that common denominator—as well as for the SS Elite—the new category of “God-believer” has been set up, and it is within this group that the spectacular religious phenomena, which have been described, have been taking place.

In the days before the search for a compromise was abandoned, interesting phenomena were to be observed. In many sections of Germany the Storm Troopers, that is, the SA, tried to take over the churches simply by attending service *en masse* every Sunday morning and entering heartily into the fights that were provoked by the sight of their brown uniforms. They claimed that the churches by right belonged to them and they commandeered them for special services at which their “German Christian” pastors spoke. In those days it was still possible to resist publicly such interference with normal church life, so the Catholics refused to permit men in uniform to enter their churches and the Evangelicals pleaded with all factions not to disturb the worship services. It is ruefully amusing to read today the “open letters” which were written in 1933 on this theme.

Even as late as 1937 the party organizations continued to feel that they had a proprietary interest in the church life.

I was in Schmalkalden for the 400th Anniversary of the “Schmalcald Articles,” which are a detailed statement made by Martin Luther of the fundamental principles of the Reformation movement in contradistinction to the Roman position. Actually, the Articles were never approved by the Schmalcald Conference. At any rate, the official program for the occasion was most ambitious, lasting a full week. On the first day, aside from an opening séance in the Town Hall, this indubitably religious occasion was celebrated by the dedication of a new Party House and a concert given by the SS with the local singing societies! The next day, Sunday, came the Festal Service in the Town Church of St. George in the morning and a *Volkfest* (People’s Festival) in the after-

noon! And so it continued throughout the week, a mélange of the Nazi and the Christian elements in a town so small that the two could not be separated. It provides a graphic illustration of the confusion that exists in the mind of the average German right now, even though his church and his state in the eyes of Nazi and Christian leaders have demarcated their lines very cleanly.

Despite the compulsory "confirmation" of the Hitler Youth, the new Nazi doctrines and usages have not as yet been received by the broad masses of the German people as a bona fide religion. Regular Sunday "services" are being conducted in many of the larger cities but they are not more popular than Christian services. Professor Harwood Childs of Princeton University, author of *The Nazi Primer*, told me after he attended one such service in Berlin that he was amazed to find the "congregation" composed largely of older women. It will be remembered that this is the Nazi description, intended to be derogatory, of the attendance at Christian services! My own reaction upon seeing the people who were present at a similar service was that a great many of them were relatives or friends of the Nazis who took part. As there was a thirty-piece orchestra in addition to the various readers, the attendance of ninety or one hundred could hardly be considered gratifying. As a general rule, the German who fell out of the habit of going to church preferred to make his Sunday excursion into the country rather than be subjected on his day of rest to more propaganda. Moreover, owing to the present policy of training body first, mind second, and spirit third, it is unlikely that Nazi Sabbath observance will be enforced, that is, if the special services such as Memorial Day, Confirmations, and so forth at their present alarming rate of increase do not absorb all the Sundays of the year.

From the observations which have just been made, however, there is no reason to conclude that the religious condition in the Third Reich is not critical. I should say that the position of the Christian church in Germany today

is similar to the position of German Jewry in 1933 when the German people and the world refused to credit the signs of the times. The only reason that Hitler has been patient with the church these last few years—that is, since the hope of voluntary co-ordination faded away—is that he has not felt fundamentally strong enough to risk forcing the issue. Every effort, however, has been made and will be made during the war to generate adequate spiritual strength to confront the Christians of Germany after it is over with one simple declaration: “Not your Jewish God, but our own German strength won this war!”

Anyone who is acquainted with the peculiar temper of the Teutonic mind knows that dualism in any form is abhorrent to it. Therefore it is inconceivable that Christianity and National Socialism will continue to live together, as do Catholicism and Fascism in Italy. Germans are tormented by a driving, blinding passion for perfection which is, at the same time, one of their most precious assets and their most besetting sin. This “thoroughness” (*Grundlichkeit*) is strikingly exemplified in the German Army and finds accurate reflection in even so minor a detail as the notorious Prussian “goose step.” Incidentally, a philosopher of World War I prophesied that Germany would not control the world until the entire nation was organized and disciplined in the same manner as the army. That philosopher, a renegade Englishman—Houston Stewart Chamberlain, by name—is accepted today as a “forerunner” of the National Socialist movement.

A second supreme virtue is “order” (*Ordnung*) and it is difficult to decide which of the two begets the other. In fact, so much pleasure is derived from putting things in “order”—once the German gets under way—that no compunctions are felt about uprooting old orders for sheer delight of substituting new orders. This is especially true when the other fellow has an “order” which to the German mind represents only disorder. A comparison of Nazi rule in occupied countries with the American “Good Neighbor Policy” demonstrates

what a world of difference separates Hitler's notion of a "New Order" from the Atlantic Charter. The two concepts meet at no point, because the minds which conceived them have nothing in common.

National Socialism, therefore, as believed and practiced by its most fanatical adherents, is a religion which can best be described as a "perfectionist cult," that is, it sets up certain oversimplified, arbitrary absolutes, it claims the unquestioning loyalty and obedience of all members, pushes its pretensions with unscrupulous zeal, and promises eternal salvation to all true believers. As Rosenberg says, "The National Socialist movement is not striving for a total State, but for the totality of the National Socialist world view in every field." Or, again, "I believe that the discovery of the racial soul in our times represents a revolution of thought which equals the discovery of Copernicus and its importance for his own times. I know that the evil powers of the past—the Christian churches—have only too well recognized this fact and that they, therefore, will attack our world view. They must feel that with us a new world has been born to replace the old outworn one." |

This brief analysis of German mentality—inadequate and exaggerated though it may be—provides sufficient basis for appreciating what was bound to happen when certain Nazis, with incredible singleness of purpose, adopted the totalitarian ideology and set about constructing their ideal State. They never intended to leave religion out of consideration. If extant religious organizations refused to "goose step" they would soon be extinct. "Order" and "thoroughness" must prevail even though other values—such as, incidentally, public peace—are thereby jeopardized or even sacrificed.

Without speculating idly on how far they will go with the new religion, let us consider how far they have gone. The name which will eventually be given to the new spiritual society now being developed by idealistic Nazis is of minor importance. Maybe it will never have any other name than National Socialist German Workers' Party. We have already seen that the text of the new NRK program is merely a

description of what is already happening. The NRK promises, first, to assume sole (soul!) responsibility in spiritual matters; second, to maintain Christian churches as historical relics; third, to raise up a new priesthood with civil service status; fourth, to remodel all Christian festivals; fifth, to make the new religion indistinguishable from devotion to the Hitlerian State. Slowly but surely those positive provisions of this program are being carried into effect! Therefore it is as superfluous to view with alarm this New Church program as it would be to fret yourself about anticyclone precautions when a flood is remorselessly digging the foundations of your house from under your feet.

\The German government today is the new church and National Socialism is the new religion. The only difficulty facing the new prophets and the new priesthood is to make the entire nation "see the light." That is why the regime finds it necessary to shore up that ancient fabric which houses the national soul until the old timbers of the Christian faith have been removed one by one and replaced with what are believed to be the stainless steel girders of Rosenberg's ideology—that is to say, until a new generation has grown up to whom the Christian faith is alien and uncongenial. (

If Hitler were to stay in power indefinitely, the Nazi State might go a long way toward achieving its purpose. The war, however, will someday be given the credit for having saved the German Church because it is inconceivable that Hitler and his doctrine will survive this conflict which is plunging all of Europe into political and economic chaos. It is hardly likely that Hitler himself will be so discredited by the tragic end of this supreme bid for world power that he will never come back to haunt the future—much as that is to be desired—but he will be recognized by historians as the involuntary evoker of the spiritual forces which awoke to overthrow him. As Professor E. H. Carr<sup>2</sup> points out, this war—like all wars at our present stage of civilization—is serving a moral purpose which must be taken into account in any plan to eliminate war permanently.

<sup>2</sup> *Conditions of Peace*, The Macmillan Company, 1942.

An examination of the religious phenomena of the new cult of the Nazi State supplies only a very incomplete picture of what is happening to the spiritual life of the German people. The roots of this exotic plant go deep into the heart of North European literature and philosophy and may be traced from Kant and Goethe through Fichte and Hegel to Wagner and Nietzsche. It is remarkable that this strain of thought which, for the first time, comes so clearly to the surface in Nazi ideology runs like a black thread through the thought of even the German theologians who were generally assumed to be altogether free of it. It is not the heritage of Martin Luther but of Luther's contemporary, Faust, whose life was glorified by Johann Wolfgang Goethe in a drama which should never have been given a "Hollywood ending" and by Oswald Spengler in a philosophy that more accurately represents the final design toward which this black thread in German thought has been woven. Hitler hopes that the "Hollywood ending" will reward his Faustian efforts but, at bottom, the German people do not believe in it. That is why the whole tremendous spiritual energy of Nazism is directed toward proving to Spengler that he is a false prophet; for obvious reasons, Spengler after 1933 was quite happy to admit that Hitler arrested the decline of the West into a new Dark Age.

In a spiritual sense the Nazis are trying to lift themselves by their bootstraps. They are "self-made men" in a way which makes the most arrogant tycoon of American business look like a country vicar in the presence of his archbishop. The Nazi slogan for ultimate success is "*Selbstbewusstsein*." In this one word is wrapped up the appeal to Germans to be "conscious of themselves." Of course, this doctrine, which has been held responsible for a large measure of American success and assurance, contains dynamite. The author of *Gott und Volk* does not hesitate to prescribe self-confidence in big doses. "We say, 'Yes, indeed, the people must have a support on which they can lean and gain strength. But this support is confidence in their own power, faith in their own future. And, if they need models or examples, the

German people can dispense with alien leaders!'—that is, Jesus.

It is wrong to suppose that the gradual destruction of Christianity by the Nazis is the simple result of a perverse desire to smash humanity's highest values. If that were true, Nazism could be dealt with easily; in fact, it would never have become as strong as it is. The danger in Nazism is that it fervently believes it has discovered or invented new values which are superior to those advocated by Christianity. By effectively silencing all criticism of itself and by exposing every weakness of the Christian church or simply defaming it, the party has had little difficulty in convincing millions of Germans that true self-expression and salvation are to be attained only through the genius of Adolf Hitler.

It is equally wrong to suppose that the Third Reich wants to do away with religion. What it wants to do is to harness the religious instinct to the Nazi movement. In a certain sense National Socialism marks a return to religion from materialism and might be described as a remote relative of that humanism which is to be observed whenever man is in the process of swinging from a predominant faith in God to a predominant faith in Things or vice versa. This humanism in modern Germany is selfishly nationalistic owing to the psychology on which it is based and, as a consequence, true religion is regarded by the Nazis as something which expresses the longings of the "Folk" soul. Therefore, they logically regard popular religious institutions as legitimate political instruments. One does not have to depend for verification of this upon philosophical speculation nor upon the declarations of Nazi leaders; a study of the German newspapers suffices.

For three months during our internment I made a careful tabulation of the religious or pseudo-religious items which appeared in the three daily papers which we were permitted to read. The nonparty *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Zeitung* in this respect did not differ perceptibly from the official *Voelkischer Beobachter*. In those three

months in the latter paper there were just sixteen items which might conceivably fall under a religious classification, four of which were violent criticisms of the English or American churches. In January there were six items as follows: Hitler mentioned God in a speech, the Church of England was again indicted for plutocracy, the Archbishop of Canterbury was again called a rascal, the United States was called non-Christian, Field Marshal von Reichenau was buried with a Nazi ceremony, and the texts of Handel's oratorios were reported to have been rewritten to exclude Old Testament themes. In February there were four notices: Hitler again mentioned God in a speech, there were two Nazi funerals for prominent officials, and there was a description of a service in Notre Dame de Paris in honor of French civilians killed in an air raid on factories in the suburbs of the French capital. In March there were six notices: The Moelders' letter reportedly written to the Archbishop of Stettin was called a forgery, the Memorial Day and Pledge Day (Nazi) services were described, there was another public funeral, the hundredth anniversary of Beethoven's death was celebrated, and the Anglican Church was upbraided for placing the Russian flag on one of its Christian altars.

This analysis is typical of the German press which is forbidden to print church news except for the defamatory articles inspired by the Propaganda Ministry. In all my six years in Germany I never saw an impartial, to say nothing of a favorable, article on the church or on Christianity, unless the annual notice that church taxes were due might be called impartial. Sometimes there were cultural supplements in the Sunday editions on religious art, emphasizing of course its Germanic quality; and, as occasion required, there were bitter editorials on the destruction of church buildings by the RAF. Generally speaking, however, the small space given to the church in wartime was filled with reports regarding religious sisters who starved the orphans in their charge in order to sell the food on the black market, or regarding Christian Scientists who disobeyed the injunction to cease ministering to their outlawed congregations.



When an important Lutheran conference was held in Sondershausen in 1940 not one inch of publicity was given to the event in any of the local or near-by papers, despite the fact that representatives from many other countries were in attendance.

Alongside this account of the treatment given to the church in the German press inside the country, let us set up a picture of the attention which was paid to it in publications destined for foreign consumption. The German Library of Information in New York issued a weekly paper euphoniouly called *Facts in Review*. Although I had access to only about one-half of the numbers over a six-month period, the tabulation of religious news in these relatively small papers affords a striking contrast to the analysis presented above. As compared with sixteen unfriendly items in the ninety issues of the *Voelkischer Beobachter* there were twelve very friendly notices in only seven available copies (out of twelve) of this propaganda sheet, dating from February to the end of April in 1941. Many interesting facts were presented which Christians in Germany would have been glad to know. For instance, religious books had placed second in the sale of all volumes during the previous year (9.5 per cent), German musicians played for the pope and were well received, Cardinal Shulte's death was much regretted in his Cologne diocese, the Catholic Church was operating mobile chapels in certain areas despite the gasoline rations, Czech churches were broadcasting their services, Catholic priests had been decorated for valor, French prisoners of war were receiving spiritual succor, Easter was celebrated according to the old German tradition, and other similar items. When I came home and read these sugary assurances I was nauseated. To top it all, the Sondershausen Conference, which had been boycotted throughout Germany, suffered from no lack of publicity through the German Library of Information in the United States.

The observation has already been made that *Das Reich*, Dr. Goebbels's weekly, is virtually the only newspaper in Germany with elaborate cultural pretensions. At Bad

Nauheim I also went through one year's file of this paper which Ernest Fischer of the AP was bringing back home in bound volumes at the bottom of his trunk. The many-paged paper probably has no religious editor but if it had his work would be easy. Only two things would have to be kept in mind, namely, to cry down Christianity in England and America, and to nourish a cult of mystical Nazism at home. Take an excerpt from Goebbels's own characterization of the British: "In their character-goulash of brutality, prevarication, hypocrisy, and pietistical God-likeness they are the Jews among the Aryans and belong to the kind of persons who must have their teeth broken in before anyone can talk reasonably with them." Meanwhile *Facts in Review* was saying, "Fifty-two thousand copies of the New Testament were distributed in Germany every month during the summer of 1940. Many of them went to soldiers at the front."

The most flagrant use of the church as a political instrument is illustrated by the cold-blooded betrayal of German churches in occupied lands. Before the conquest of each nation on its borders the Third Reich invariably got around to protesting, among other standard "abuses," against the treatment given to German pastors and priests in the minority areas, especially in Czechoslovakia and Poland. The accounts of fleeing or martyred ministers were always lurid because their propaganda value was high. It was believed that no one, especially not the good church members, could think of peaceful clergymen patiently submitting to torture and death without becoming angry, whereas these ministers had in many cases actually permitted themselves to be used by the Hitler regime as a kind of fifth column. The Nazi foreign organization with its headquarters in Stuttgart did not hesitate to use German-speaking congregations all over the world as a nucleus for their local party groups. The methods were sickeningly similar and cynical because they always took advantage of the fact that most isolated colonies had retained a natural affection for the homeland and were

pathetically prompt to respond to the keen interest which the new regime displayed in their welfare. Gratefully they accepted the monies which were poured into their struggling schools and community projects. Gradually the home government requested or demanded a "return on its investment" in the form of absolute loyalty to party plans and projects, even if it implied treason to the new homeland, as in the Western Hemisphere. Local colony leaders were selected and sent back to Germany to be trained and feted without expense, thus putting them under still greater obligation. There was a seamy side too. The hand of the Gestapo reached into the most obscure corners to discipline backsliders. Pressure could, if necessary, be brought to bear on relatives still living in the Reich.

It is a very sordid story which nevertheless must some day be told in all its ugly detail. Suffice it to say that both the benevolent old nationalistic pastors in the churches which have been rejoined to Germany as well as the rabid "German Christians" who loved not merely the Vaterland but the Fuehrer received a cold and cruel awakening when they found that this glorious New Germany which was so interested in protecting their feeble churches from an unfriendly non-German government had no real interest in the churches, and proceeded to use the newly won territories as guinea-pig areas for religious experiments. The Protestant church in Posen, for example, instead of finding itself reunited with the German Evangelical Church of Prussia was subordinated to the local Gauleiter. The Lutheran pastors of Alsace, instead of receiving a warm welcome for their steady resistance to the French, discovered that their salaries, which the French had continued to pay on the old German basis, were now to be cut off completely. In short, the Nazis tossed their stout little churches on the ash heap after their period of usefulness was past.

The same procedure was followed in exploiting other organizations, but it is a particularly rueful fact which nothing can completely explain, that German clergymen in non-German countries could have been so blind to their eventual

fate as to work for the very people who intended to destroy them. A partial explanation is to be derived from the peculiar psychology of émigrés whose sentimental regard for the homeland often refuses to admit that the Mother Country can ever do wrong. After all, the pastors at home were very reluctant to admit even to themselves that they were face to face with a new religion which was diametrically opposed to the traditional faith of the nation . . . and which was to be the trap in which the souls of the people were to be caught. Consequently, the cautious but reassuring letters which the émigrés received from colleagues at home were strangely devoid of information which might confirm the black news published in the foreign press.

Changes can be brought about so gradually that they do not reveal their full extent until the observer stops to review everything that has happened over a given period of time. Little by little the people and pastors of Germany had become accustomed to the unfavorable conditions which had been imposed upon them and, in an effort to retain the few privileges which were left, new sacrifices were tolerated. Many of them, by now, have got to the point where they cannot bring themselves to look back. They know that they would get the sort of view of German living conditions that I got, for example, when I returned from a short holiday in Switzerland in 1941. Before visiting Berne and Basel and Zurich I had not realized how shabby Berlin and the other German cities had become for lack of paint; before seeing the well-dressed Swiss I had not realized how drab and threadbare the cleanly German *Buerger* was; and before dining in aromatic Swiss restaurants I had not really noticed that Berlin eating places with their filthy linen, if any, and their poor food were actually worse than we grumblers painted them. The same thing was true of the religious situation. The inroads which pagan ideology has made on the religious basis of German life become enormous only when all the facts are assembled and compared with the traditional picture or with the status of religion in other lands, excepting Russia.

That is the reason why I have given this picture of Nazi Shintoism first place in a discussion of the German religious situation, not because it has superseded Christianity as the chief religion but because of the ambitious plans which the ruling clique harbors for the future. The conquest of the German soul is to set the final seal of victory on the National Socialist revolution and provide it with a "holy spirit" for the ideological—and actual—subjugation of the world! There must be a crystal-clear comprehension of this aspect of affairs before it is possible to understand the church struggle to which we shall turn our attention in the next chapter. Religious faith is, in Nazi eyes, merely a political instrument for controlling masses of people.

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PART II

The Old State Religion



## CHAPTER VI

### *Meet the German Church*

NEWSPAPER coverage of the church predicament in Germany since 1933 has been unusually complete, especially in the United States and England, because American and English correspondents in Berlin were well aware that the good churchmembers at home were deeply concerned at the trend taken by religious affairs in Hitler's Reich; and that even our non-Christians, either out of morbid curiosity or sympathetic interest, seized eagerly upon all news of men like Pastor Niemoeller or the Bishop of Muenster. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that this news coverage contributed very little to a real understanding of the fundamental religious issues which were involved, simply because the overworked reporters had very little time to spend on historical research and, even if they had done so, their editors at home would not have accepted long essays on the background of these current events. Furthermore, daily newspapers—except for syndicated columnists and editorial writers—were not concerned with the implications of the spotnews which they carried; in other words, they never stopped to ask themselves what relation the German church struggle bore to the larger aspects of a worldwide Christian brotherhood.

Of course, news reports are not, according to the American tradition, intended to be made the vehicle of moral judgment. This is a polite fiction because there is no use disregarding the patent fact that human judgment can hardly be dissociated from the telling of a story, especially where a selection of data occurs. Such a selection of data inevitably occurred in the exploitation of the "church story," as it was called, and the result has been that a greater confusion exists in America regarding this aspect of the New Germany's national life than regarding any other. The journalists were



not, as I have said, altogether responsible for the merciless emphasis which was placed on certain sensational angles of the church struggle; it was evident that American readers, accustomed to relishing lurid details, really did clamor for news of arrests, persecutions, concentration camps, and pagan ceremonies. It was also true that they indicted and judged Hitler, the pro-Nazi pastors, and the anti-Christian Nazis on the basis of the news stories which they read. That their judgments in this respect happened to be correct is not due so much to impartial reporting on the one side and the soundness of their critical reasoning on the other side, as to an aboriginal mass instinct for scenting a natural enemy.

At points such as this I am always tempted to digress from my own feeble effort to write a factual account and luxuriate in expounding personal opinions. I shall limit myself, however, to injecting the additional thought that, for better or worse, American journalism probably played a principal role in the German church struggle. It remains for the future to decide whether our persistent preoccupation with religious affairs in Germany helped or hindered the cause of Christianity in Europe. Maybe the Nazis would not have been driven into the camp of the neopagans if American papers had not "agitated," as the German press said, on behalf of men like Niemoeller. Maybe, on the other hand, the German church might have been completely Nazified if it had not received from outside the country that support which it could not bring to effective expression on the inside. There are a lot of "maybes" here, but my point is that American public opinion, which unquestionably played one of the chief roles in the drama, ought to be thoroughly conscious of its moral responsibility; in short, it ought to know as much as possible about this subject in which it takes so great an interest. Even anti-Nazi Germans occasionally became indignant at the well-intentioned meddling of essentially isolationist Americans who felt a fascination for Hitler that was almost pathological.

American correspondents, with few exceptions, tried to

acquaint themselves with the background of the religious struggle and many of them referred their news items to me, as American pastor, for comment. Ralph Barnes, chief of the *Herald-Tribune* bureau who was subsequently killed in an airplane crash in Yugoslavia, was genuinely interested in the whole question and we had many talks about it. Although erratic in some of his prognostications, he was a brilliant reporter and his death was a great shock to his many devoted friends. On one occasion, after we had chewed over a recent antichurch measure and I had been carried away by my own feelings on the subject, I said, "Now, Ralph, I want you to put a final paragraph to your article stating that Americans who are indifferent to the fate of their own churches at home cannot be expected to understand what these things mean to Christians in Germany." Barnes's eyes popped somewhat more than usual and then a big smile broke across his face as he said, "I'd love to say that but you know I can't."

The best that the Berlin correspondents could do was to provide a limited background for the isolated news items which they cabled to New York. The result of these reports over a period of years has been that thousands of Americans believe that all churches have been closed in Germany and that virtually all ministers are in concentration camps. When confronted sooner or later with assurances that the churches are not closed and only a few of the clergy are deprived of their liberty, these Americans swing to the opposite extreme and doubt almost everything their newspapers print. A lot of the blame for this may be laid upon the sensational headlines which are used to cap even the most carefully written articles and, of course, upon the careless reader who peruses nothing but the headlines in his quest for thrills.

There is another consideration which must be impressed upon the reader before proceeding to a discussion of the church struggle, namely, that it is absolutely pointless to attempt to understand the religious situation in Germany by comparing it with the ecclesiastical history and present

status of religious organizations in America. The religious development of the American people is something altogether unique and, consequently, its problems are of a different type from those which face European churches. It must be remembered, for example, that the conquest of Germany for Christianity goes back to those dark days of a medieval age when the spirit of the early church had already been corseted by the ecclesiastical conventions of hierarchical tradition and dictation. Before the German tribes became enlightened with the education brought to them by their new religion, Christianity had already descended from a spiritual faith to a mechanical contraption of prayers and offerings. Spiritual power had to a great extent been replaced by temporal power.

By Martin Luther's day there was just enough of a vital spark left in German Christianity to ignite the heap of combustible souls who looked to the church in vain for full inspiration and solace. It is quite comprehensible that German historians even today should look upon the Reformation as an eruption of the national spirit which revolted against temporal domination by a worldly priesthood that took everything and gave almost nothing. The Reformation was in certain respects a democratic revolution. It took the responsibility for the care of the German spirit out of the hands of the "absentee owner" and placed it in the hands of authorities nearer home. It brought God nearer to the individual by making every Christian his own priest, but it laid up future trouble by depositing the temporal ecclesiastical authority in the lap of the local ruler who, technically, delegated it to a bishop or prelate of the church.

Thus the concept of the church has always been closely connected in the German mind with the concept of the state. It is tied up with the high ideal of a Holy German Empire which burned all the stronger in the German soul because the dream was never adequately realized. And, instead of losing this vision as the centuries unrolled, it was rationalized and elevated into a philosophy, consciously or unconsciously, by every thinker from Kant to Nietzsche. It was

glorified by many of the greatest dramatists, poets, novelists, and musicians from the Saxon author of the "Heliand" to Richard Wagner and, at last, Hans Grimm whose *Volk ohne Raum* (People without Space) is the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the Nazi movement. Therefore, to those who are familiar with this tendency in German thought, the concept of the *Schwarze Korps* will not be altogether unexpected:

The State is the living expression of the divine order experienced by the community of the nation. It draws its moral laws from the divine order, from the revelation of God in nature, through the destiny, the life and the death of the nation. The National-Socialist State will create the divine order in all spheres of life. It promotes what is natural, and combats what is contrary to nature.

This state religion, the article continues, must stand above the confessions. There can be only one divine order, and the state, being bound to it, must leave every individual free to seek the revelation either through an intermediary, as in the Christian churches, or as a believer in God (Gottgläubiger) who thinks the intermediary can be dispensed with. The state cannot bind itself to one or the other and, as it has no intention of adding a state church to those already existing, regards itself as justified in demanding that the "political churches should turn themselves into truly religious communities."

The Germans who, at various times and in various places, could no longer reconcile their religious faith with the political system under which they lived had learned to emigrate. Luther was not quite ten years old when Columbus discovered America and laid vistas of new worlds before the incredulous eyes of those who had good reasons for leaving the old world. Modern Germans may not be so strongly conditioned by the events of the sixteenth century, but the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, with their tremendous emigrations, have instilled a *Wanderlust* in the nation and, at the same time, left a deposit of descendants who were content to bow under the increasingly heavy yoke

of discipline, control, domination, and dictation. Most of the "rebels" came to the United States, like the Pennsylvania Germans. Whenever Nazis remarked about my family name and asked whether I never felt the call of my German blood, I replied that my ancestors left the Vaterland with no more regret than is felt by the great majority of Jews who have been driven out in search of a new home.

Germany, in brief, has never known the religious independence which was jealously guarded by our colonists and later placed at the basis of American government. Vaguely we realize this but its implications have not been grasped by our imaginations. From the Reformation to the National Socialist Revolution the German church has been sheltered under the arm of the German State, even in the days of Frederick the Great in whose estimation Christianity suffered because of his royal father's excess of stern piety. German pastors and priests, following the medieval tradition, were accustomed to be the pillars of every community and, although discredited to a certain degree by the Enlightenment, they retained their favored position at the top of the social strata. So far as organization was concerned, the church's prestige was enhanced rather than diminished in the nineteenth century by a new arrangement with the state to collect regular taxes from church members, by the regulations requiring civil officials to be baptized Christians, and similar acts. Underneath this protective armor of social and political approval, the maggots of skepticism, rationalism, materialism, and socialism were eating away the very substance of faith, but the façade was unaffected.

Under the circumstances none of the religious phenomena which characterized American or even British Christianity were to be found in Germany, least of all those gales of revivalism which occasionally blew with such destructive and cleansing force through our free churches. Sunday schools in Germany remained a weak and inconsiderable influence because religious instruction was given into the hands of professional schoolteachers. The missionary spirit, although German projects along missionary lines have been admi-

nable, never really seized hold of those amorphous congregations in vast, half-empty churches. The pastors for the most part were unfamiliar with the heart-rending job of trying to build up struggling parishes, because parish lines were carefully demarcated and there were almost no Germans who did not belong to church and pay the stipulated tax. It must be granted, in spite of the foregoing, that the inner mission work of the Catholic and Protestant churches was exemplary. The German church was characterized by a quiet conviction and strength in the Christian life of the nation, without which indeed present-day resistance to the Nazi persecution would never have been possible; but any close observer of the German scene was forced to the inescapable conclusion that the odor of decay and death hung between the soaring Gothic arches of those great cathedrals. The death rattle could be heard in the uninspired singing of choirless congregations who, on the other hand, would crowd the same church doors on a holiday afternoon to satisfy their hunger for fine music with the rendition of a splendid oratorio.

Hitler has changed much of this in the few years he has been in power, but it was never his intention to do so. It is a common observation that more people are going to church than ever before, but they do not go to hear a Nazi message. Even now only those churches possessing a preacher with a genuine Christian message are full of worshippers. Such churches are not as numerous as they should be, largely because a new generation of preachers which can speak to a new generation of churchgoers has not yet risen up. If the Nazis have their way, this new race of ministers will never arise, at least not in the state universities which are the only kind of universities Germany has.

At this point it would be well to correct another misconception entertained by many Americans, namely, that the various factions within the German Evangelical Church are actually separate denominations. There are independent denominations, such as the Baptists, Methodists, and so on,

in Germany but they constitute a minor fraction—not more than a million or so—of all Germans. When one speaks of the German church one thinks of the entire population which, since the annexation of Austria and other Catholic territories, is divided almost equally between Roman Catholic and Evangelical (Lutheran-Reformed). The Protestants still have a slight majority.

Within the single Evangelical church, however, there are many provincial churches which are more or less autonomous but which could be compared with American churches only if there were a "Church of Ohio," a "Church of California," and so on, within an all-embracing "Church of the United States." The designations which have become so familiar today—such as "Confessional," "German Christian," and the like—do not describe separate entities so far as recognized "corporations under public law" are concerned. These "churches" may be described more aptly as movements within the church which, for purposes of comparison, are not unlike the "high church" and "low church" movements within, let us say, the Anglican Church. The designations actually indicate the degree of relative importance attributed to church and state under the Hitler regime. Thus it frequently happens in the larger cities where big congregations have three or four pastors that one or two of the ministers may be "Confessional," one or two of them may be "Neutral," and maybe there is one who is a "German Christian." Naturally, they do not always get along very well together, but usually the work in the big parishes is divided in such a manner that a semblance of unity is preserved. As a general rule the "Confessional" pastors have the largest audiences when they preach and they usually have the largest catechetical classes. In one Berlin church where there was one "Confessional" pastor and one "German Christian," the former had over one hundred catechumens and the latter had only two or three. Of course, the implication is that Nazi parents do not bother to send their children to Christian catechetical class at all.

As time went on there was, of course, a natural tendency

for the pastors who were congenial to draw together, or for men with pronounced viewpoints to team up only with "neutrals." Every effort was being made by the Nazis to eliminate the opposition by preventing the ordination of candidates who were radically "Confessional" and by setting up strict requirements in the state universities through which all prospective pastors must pass. As a countermeasure the "Confessionals" established an administration of their own, as we shall see, and they set up supplementary seminaries which were quickly outlawed; but the fact remains that even the Niemoeller faction still constitutes an integral part of the German "state-church." The "German Christians," on the contrary, have been technically disbanded because it was felt that a separate movement was superfluous in the Nazi State. They remain, however, as a very real, if not vital, factor in the church picture owing to the fact that they enjoy official protection. As all theological professors must be party members and, ostensibly, Nazi Christians, no need was felt to set up faculties outside the state universities.

Needless to say there are no "German Christians" in concentration camps. The "Moderates" or "Neutrals" have had nothing more than an occasional visit from the Gestapo or to the police station. Although some two thousand of the "Confessional" pastors have at one time or another been behind the bars or called up for repeated examinations, not more than a handful of them is in jail or concentration camps at the present time. Many hundreds, however, have been retired from active service before their time, or ostracized from certain cities or provinces, or been ordered to refrain from preaching and teaching. The government has tried to maintain the fiction that these men entered into political activity against the State. This charge is very hard to prove because not even the Nazis have been able to define political activity with exactitude . . . otherwise they would have to arrest most of the "German Christians" who have managed to stir up more unrest than all the "Confessionals" together, with the possible exception of Niemoeller. In Germany it is impossible even to grunt without being sus-



pected of treasonable utterance, provided that someone is interested in denouncing the grunter. Americans have heard a lot about these restrictions of freedom of speech, but no one can know what it really means until he has lived under them.

The main difference between the "Confessionals" and the "German Christians" is, as we shall abundantly see in subsequent chapters, that the latter put Hitler and Germany before Christ and the universal brotherhood of men, whereas the former believe that they can fulfill their national obligations best by paying primary allegiance to Jesus Christ and the larger Christian fellowship. The "Moderates" have either tried to reconcile the two loyalties in their lives or they are "Confessionals" who have not as yet declared themselves openly. There are certain refinements of these positions and certain historical reasons for them which are well worth considerable study. In the next three chapters a chronological account of the evolution of the church struggle will be presented so that the isolated news items which have been appearing in the American press may be viewed as pieces of a historical mosaic which up till now have not been assembled at all. Some of the pieces are still missing no doubt, but it is not too early to attempt a fairly accurate reconstruction of what has happened to Christianity as an organized religion under Hitler. It is, of course, much too early to estimate what he has done to Christianity as a personal faith and way of life.

Just as the first section of this book was devoted to portraying the non-Christian attempt to lay hold of the German soul, this section is concerned with the vain hope of ardent National Socialists to capture the German soul by pre-empting its traditional home, namely, the church. In 1937, Joseph Buerckel, one of Hitler's most useful Gauleiters who later helped in the subjugation of Austria, spoke at Speyer and admitted that the Christians had not yet been subdued. "Do you know, my German compatriots," he asked, "that there remains in Germany only one party which has unfortunately evaded us? It has concealed itself in the religious

catacombs, saying it is persecuted and that salvation is at hand because it knows that fools go quickest into the traps of the hypocrites. This party has nothing whatsoever to do with the real saints. There must be an end of this barricading behind the walls of the churches!"

The story of the struggle of that church with the State represented by Joseph Buerckel is one of the most amazing records of spiritual resistance in the face of political pressure that the history of Christianity has to offer. The old spirit of "protestantism"—whereby no exclusion of the Catholics is intended—has flamed up again. Protesting somehow lies in the very make-up of the German, especially the North German, but his religious protests in the last century had dribbled out into comparatively inconsequential disputes on obscure doctrinal issues or in petty squabbling over social questions whose connection with the great problems of life was tenuously remote. Polemical pamphlets, right up to Hitler's advent, continued to fill the air like snow flurries out of season but they never seemed to "settle."

As late as 1935 and 1936 when I still attended classes in two German universities, it seemed as though the professors were interested chiefly in mental gymnastics. The students who graduated from the faculties of theology were frequently learned on the finer points of dogma but they were ill-prepared for practical church work and contact with the personal problems of their parishioners. In fact, few of them expected to do the kind of yeoman service performed by an American parson. Here lies another important difference between German and American Christianity. They would become typical civil servants with a fairly secure financial and social position. They would stand on a kind of pedestal in the community and wait for their people to come to them, during office hours of course. In the towns and cities, where there were two or three pastors to each church, they would preach only once a week. Owing to the very large parishes they would, however, have to officiate at many baptisms, marriages, and funerals. In short,

they would have a kind of office job and, like a physician, be on call. The pastor's position was not necessarily a sinecure but it was stereotyped and clerical.

All that has changed in the past few years. The old days—I shan't call them good—will probably never return. The younger men, few though they are who are being attracted to the ministry, are definitely not entering the profession because of its financial security or social prestige. In the Third Reich neither of these attractions remains. Prestige and security are to be found only in easily obtainable government jobs. In fact, owing to compulsory entrance into the army, the supply of ministerial students has practically been cut off. Some able-bodied young men may still study medicine, for example, but absolutely none may study theology. Consequently, the theological faculties in many universities have closed and in the others there is only a handful of students.

The condition of the theological faculties gives an accurate index to the disastrous impact of Nazism on the German church. Between 1932 and 1934 the number of ministerial candidates had reached a post-World War peak. In 1932 there were 7,085 Protestant theological students, including 334 women. Three years later this figure was almost cut in half, to 4,113 students. In 1939, just before the outbreak of war, Professor Paul Althaus of Erlangen published some statistics regarding the future of the ministry. He noted that many North German universities had lost 75 percent of their theological students and that the South German universities were not much better off. Erlangen itself had had 660 in 1933-34 and now had only 220. Whereas students of Protestant theology constituted 6 percent of all university students in 1934, ministerial candidates—both Catholic and Protestant—dropped to 4 per cent in 1937 and to 2.12 per cent in 1939! It is true that Protestant ministerial students at Berlin fell from about 1,000 in 1933 to 472 in 1937, and in the second year of the war to fewer than 20. Tuebingen, which maintained itself longest, dropped from 672 in 1937 to about 80 in 1941.

Professor Althaus estimated that the German church needs at least six hundred new Evangelical ministers each year and that not one half of that number could be attained even in peacetime. Of course, a sharp drop of candidates was to be felt in most professions, but the ministry was by far the hardest hit. With the outbreak of war, of course, the situation became more critical owing to the fact that all young men were drafted for military duty. Retired ministers were recalled to active service and, in most other cases, active pastors were forced to double, triple, and quadruple their work. It is hard to foresee just what the eventual result of this great shortage of pastors will be. Germans have learned that trade and politics are not only much more remunerative than the professions but that they are less opprobrious in Nazi eyes. Furthermore, long years of exacting studies are not necessary to such careers as Hitler now offers to clever men who, even in peacetime, must spend two years in military training and six months in labor camp. Professor Althaus was right when he said, "The theological students of today are courageous people." This applies also to candidates for the Catholic priesthood and sisterhood who normally outnumber the Protestants two to one.

The increase of work and the increase of suffering have given the German pastor and the German priest a new outlook on his work. He has seen his youth lured or driven away from the church, and he hasn't been able to do much about it. He has seen a new religion promulgated with the tacit approval of the state, against which the state-church was prevented from reacting effectively. He has seen the Jews—including Christian non-Aryans of his own congregation—robbed of everything they owned and hunted from the country. He has conducted the funerals not only of suicides but of mentally incompetent people who were murdered in the asylums to which they had been entrusted. He has seen a new World War in the making and he has seen it break once more over the heads of his people, and then he has been hindered in every way from ministering

both to the soldiers at the front and his own parishioners at home.

I could continue such a list indefinitely but further itemization would not really help to show why it is that German pastors have been forced to "protest," not because National Socialism has touched their bodies or the bodies of their people, not because it has violated their minds or the mental integrity of their Christian members, but because it has entered into their very soul—and the soul of German Christianity. Consequently, it has become relatively dangerous to go to a church where there is a "protesting" pastor. The reaction is not dissimilar, superficially, to that of many Americans who, in smaller communities, are marked, or feel themselves marked, by attendance at the sermons of a pacifist pastor. I say that in order to try to bring home to Americans the courage it takes to stand on the unpopular side, even in a country which does not live in terror of a Gestapo.

For pastors to communicate with one another regarding what is happening to the church in the various parts of Germany is both difficult and dangerous. It is impossible to use the open mails. Consequently a grapevine telegraph has been set up and messages are speeded back and forth with incredible swiftness. Arrests made in southwestern Germany on a Saturday night may be known in Berlin on Sunday morning in time for a special petition to be included in the pastor's prayer. Furthermore, these pastors have not surrendered the young people without a struggle. Small groups of the youth have caught the spirit of their devoted pastors and been inflamed with a loyalty to the Christian faith in a way that our American youth—even the most active leaders of Christian Endeavor, for example—can hardly imagine.

I was asked to speak to a group of boys, aged 16 to 20, who assembled once a month in an air-raid cellar in Berlin to worship and strengthen each other against the persistent attempts of National Socialism to divide them from their churches. It was no haphazard, indifferent gathering. I was amazed, almost frightened, by the fervor of their faith and by the adult intensity of their convictions and, not least, by the eagerness with which they hung on every word I used

to describe the manifold activities of American churches. I had the feeling that a description of heaven with streets of gold would not have moved them nearly so deeply as that simple account of the fruits, both good and bad, of religious freedom in the United States. After they finished their service with one of Luther's robust hymns and a brief prayer and before I took my leave of them on the blacked-out street, they said to me, "Tell the young Christians of America about us and tell them there are more groups like us who will not give up the Christian faith of our fathers!" Out of such groups—and there are many throughout Germany—will come the new Christian church. Both the party and the church know that the future belongs to the next generation. At present the State has the youth but the church has not given up. The Brown Shirts have not forgotten what the determined fanaticism of a small group can accomplish; I have spoken with clear-sighted Nazis who see in the resurrection of a dead church the end of their own movement.

But it is an uphill fight. The church must be reformed if the vast mass of its members is to become actively interested again. Today, even in parishes where very strong Christian leaders are at work and the spark of faith has been fanned into flame by Confessional pastors, not more than two or three per cent of the total number of church-tax payers come to communion. I have been in a country church—whose pastor, it is true, was a mediocre preacher of the old school—when I and a friend of mine were the only adults in the congregation at the Sunday morning service! But the children of the catechetical class were seated in the gallery. That was a couple years ago. Just before leaving Germany I heard that the town's veterans of the last war had been forbidden to attend a funeral service in the church in their uniforms. Whereupon they simply doffed their regulation caps, left them outside the church door, and went in to service! That is what I mean by the new "protestant" church in Germany.

With this picture in the background of our minds it will be much easier to comprehend the dramatic story which follows.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Hitler Makes Himself Clear: 1933*

IN THE "church problem" which confronted Hitler shortly after he came to power there was more than met the casual observer's eye. Neither the Nazis nor the American public had the remotest notion of the complexity of the so-called "situation" which the heavy hand of Adolf Hitler rapidly converted into a crisis by attempting with undue haste to complete his national revolution with a re-formation of the national church. Hitler's interest in Christianity was purely political and he thought of the church only in terms of one more national institution which was to be "co-ordinated" and utilized in the erection of the New Order for the special purpose of giving spiritual and moral support to the State to which—in his opinion—it automatically owed allegiance. In short, Hitler looked upon the church as a state institution and, I believe, fully intended to restore it to the virtually monopolistic spiritual control which it had once enjoyed.

The American public, on the other hand, while sensing instinctively the fundamental importance of the imminent struggle between two diametrically opposed world-views, was even more mistaken than Hitler in thoughtlessly comparing the German Church with the American Church which has no direct ties, nor even a historical connection, with the United States government. In other words, the Christians of America, upon the basis of a free church tradition, were ill-prepared to comprehend the psychological positions occupied by the Nazis and the Christians in Germany where, up until the end of the World War, the head of the state was also head of the church.

The church leaders of Germany, although fully conscious of the historical ramifications of the situation in which they found themselves in 1933, were divided as to the attitude

they should take toward the new movement. Some of them envisaged a glorious new era for the church under the protection of an avowedly Christian regime because National Socialism had placed the plank of "Positive Christianity" in the Party Platform as early as 1921. Others, with keener perception, felt dubious about the Nazis' appreciation of Christian values and came to the conclusion that the German Church, in gaining the world, would lose its own soul. Still others—the majority—conservatively reserved judgment and quietly waited to see what Hitler would really do.

Thus, both inside and outside Germany there was great confusion on the church question in the year that Hitler came to power. Dr. Charles Macfarland, who visited Germany in the fall of 1933, accurately reports the conflicting opinions which were prevalent at that time when no one was absolutely sure of the line that Hitler was going to follow and when the stock answer to all misgivings voiced by the American churchman was "You must remember that this is a revolution."<sup>1</sup> By the time I arrived in Germany just two years later some of the confusion was clearing away and the lines of battle were beginning to emerge; but by that time the Nazi party had already entrenched itself in an impregnable position and cleverly divided the religious opposition. Pro-Nazi and anti-Nazi factions among the clergy were at loggerheads in an unequal battle. Of the eighteen thousand protestant pastors only two thousand belonged to the pro-Nazi "German Christians"—as over against six thousand anti-Nazi "Confessionals"—but they enjoyed the full support of the regime. The remaining ten thousand were variously called conservative or moderate or neutral. The Roman Catholic Church also, while not openly split by factions owing to its more closely knit hierarchy, was inwardly torn by acrimonious partisanships.

A glance at the historical background of the Protestant, or Evangelical church, which is so typically German will reveal still more clearly the essential strength and weakness inherent in the Christian organization which was brought

<sup>1</sup> *The New Church and the New Germany*, The Macmillan Company, 1934.



face to face with the necessity of saying yes or no to Hitler. It will also show some reasons why the Brown Shirts, who lived in an atmosphere of post-World War revolution and facile phrases, were unable to comprehend the stubborn tenacity of a deeply rooted institution which was pledged to view all things *sub specie aeternitatis*. Dr. Macfarland was, I believe, absolutely correct in stating, after his conversation with Hitler, that the Fuehrer's profession of interest in and sympathy for the welfare of the church was innocent of any intelligent comprehension of Christianity's significance as a universal and timeless faith. Hitler's acquaintanceship with Christianity was confined to a sketchy childhood remembrance of Austrian Catholicism and to his political contacts with Nazified clergymen who led him to think that the German church could only be grateful to him for rescuing it from the clutches of atheistic Bolshevism. He was ill-acquainted with the genius of North German Protestantism which, while dormant and divided, was by no means as dead as he supposed. It is no wonder that he was surprised and chagrined by the unexpected spectacle of an aroused church militant which, having caught a glimpse of Nazi intentions, could not be lulled to sleep again by Nazi subsidies and reassurances.

Hitler came to power under the impression that his Fuehrership automatically included sovereignty over the German people not only in a political sense but in every sense in which the Volk could be considered an integral entity. As over 97 per cent of the citizens of the state also belonged to the church at that time, the concepts of church and state simply coincided in the minds of many Germans, including Hitler. Furthermore, the separation of church and state, although specifically provided for in the constitution of the Weimar Republic of August 11, 1919, had never been carried into full effect. All efforts to separate church and state before the World War had failed, but with the upheavals consequent upon overthrow of the monarchy this resistance collapsed and a hasty divorce was granted by the new constitution, the adoption of which was not only un-

contested but welcomed by the church factions which formerly opposed all thought of separation. Although this constitution clearly said, "A state-church does not exist" (Article 137), the legislative steps necessary to sever the financial relations between church and state were never taken and the Republic continued not only to collect the church taxes but to grant certain annual subsidies which the state had agreed to make a century before.

The only practical effect of this change therefore was to extend an equivalent degree of ecclesiastical freedom to all churches and sects and to make religious bodies subject to a certain amount of government control by requiring them to be registered as "corporations under public law." In short, the Republic declared a kind of neutrality in religious matters, except in so far as it continued to tolerate a connection in financial and legal affairs. To regularize this connection the church paid to the state a nominal fee for the collection of taxes accruing from its members, and it was understood that the subsidies which the state kept on paying in spite of the provisions of the Constitution were merely compensation for certain adjustments made in the matter of church properties after the Napoleonic wars and without which the church would fall into serious financial straits.

Thus the relationship between church and state in Germany was and is exceedingly complex although, as the author of *Gott und Volk* says, "one stroke would set us (the Nazi state) free." By this one stroke is meant the suppression of Christianity which could be accomplished by cutting the purse strings in accordance with the Constitution, especially if the present Nazi law making supplementary church collections illegal were not revoked.

It is little hard to understand why Hitler continues to permit the state collection of church taxes and payment of subsidies when he could on technical legal grounds discontinue them. He certainly has not been unaware of the existence of this possible means of forcing the church into line. In fact, in the spring of 1942 the Gauleiter of Wuerttemberg took steps to deprive the church of local help in the

collection of taxes, ostensibly as a wartime measure to relieve the provincial government of extra work. The provincial church authorities protested against this sort of false economy which would merely necessitate the erection of duplicate fiscal machinery. It remains to be seen whether this purely oppressive measure will be extended to other provinces and eventually cover all churches in the Reich. It may well be a sign that the "patience" of the long-suffering Nazis has once more been exhausted.

Up till now Hitler has taken every occasion to reproach the church for its ingratitude in the matter of the state's financial support. In his Reichstag speech on January 30, 1939, he angrily presented the statistics of money turned over to the church and pointed out how these "contributions" had increased from one hundred and thirty million to five hundred million Reichsmarks since he came to power. Of course, the church taxes which for the most part stand in direct relation to the income tax increased as the national income increased, so that he can actually claim little credit for deliberately stepping up the church income. On the contrary, if Hitler had thrown the church on its own resources without at the same time suppressing its efforts to survive, he would have forfeited the financial club which he still holds over the heads of the ecclesiastical authorities who are understandably reluctant to insist on complete independence. Besides, to disown a national institution like the church is contrary to the basic principles of National Socialism which aims to bring everything into the state rather than cast it out.

This leads to a second consideration in the peculiarly strong-weak position of the German Church. At the same time that the historical trend was leading to a separation of state and church, there was another trend to unite the separate German state-churches into one great Reichskirche. The concept of a united German Church, which became explicit in the eighteenth century as the dream of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation faded under the

increasing impotence of Catholic Austria and the rise to power of Protestant Prussia, can be traced clear back to the Reformation when Roman supremacy was defied and the church was split up into provincial bodies under the direct protection of petty princelings, who alone decided whether their subjects should be Catholic or Protestant. Luther himself wanted a healthy and whole Christian church in Germany, but the princelings could not unite and the boundaries they set up effectually separated the provincial churches from each other. Nevertheless the ferment of nationalism was at work and it was inevitable that a common language and common aspirations should lead to thoughts of a re-united church.

Not until the nineteenth century, with the establishment of the Second Reich, did the desire for protestant unity make any real practical headway and result in the famous Prussian Union of Lutheran and Reformed communions. This was followed by a long series of attempts to bring all German Evangelical churches together both with and without the blessing of the official church governments. The most substantial success was obtained in the Eisenach Conference of 1852 which included all German evangelical churches except one small body and the Austrian Protestants. Then followed a long period during which power was generated in this body to sponsor a German Evangelical Church Committee in 1903 which, however, received only certain delegated administrative powers and lacked the initiative and prestige of a legislative, or synodical, organization.

Church unity arose—like national unity—out of the ashes of the World War. It must be remembered that up until 1918 the German Empire still consisted of autonomous kingdoms and principalities whose rulers abdicated or were dethroned only when the Kaiser fled to Holland and that these separate rulers were the heads of their local church governments. The German Evangelical Church Committee, at the request of the Conference of the German Evangelical Workers' Organization, called a nation-wide convention which met in Dresden in September, 1919, and perpetuated itself.

The constitution of this body which was called the German Evangelical Church Federation was accepted two years later in Stuttgart by all the Landeskirchen and thus a practical form of church union was achieved.

But this Federation, while corresponding fairly well to the new Republican ideals of the time, was not a Reichskirche or a Volkskirche in the strict sense of the word. The old Landeskirchen were left intact and there was still no Reichsbischof who could personify a united German Protestantism. Many pastors still yearned for this final consummation of national unity but there were many others who either did not like the idea at all or thought that the time was not ripe. Those who wanted complete unity coincided to large degree with the strongly nationalist group who supported Hitler's "Fuehrerprinzip" as over against federal parliamentarianism.

It is surprising that the growth of the Second Empire under Bismarck had so little real effect on the efforts for church unity which, it seems, were motivated not so much by the German political aspirations of the day as by a parallel movement within the church, inspired—like the government—by nationalistic philosophy and literature. Under the Kaiser there was a Reich Kultus Minister who had general charge of all religious and educational matters in their relation to government but who had no real authority in the church of which the emperor was the titular head. If the Republic had lived, the old order of things—in its practical aspects—would doubtlessly have continued, that is, the provincially governed church would have enjoyed national prestige without organic unity.

Perhaps the most authoritative definition of the status of organized Christianity in Republican Germany has been written by Professor Friedrich Giese for Germany's outstanding religious encyclopedia:<sup>2</sup> "One can really say that within the formal frame of the law of separation (of church and state) the actually valid politico-ecclesiastical system is not free-churchism but restricted state-church sovereignty (Staats-

<sup>2</sup> *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 1927, Vol. III, p. 821.

kirchenhoheit) with extended ecclesiastical independence." If an encyclopedia could say that at least six years before the Nazis destroyed the Weimar Republic, is it any wonder that Hitler expected the church to be obediently submissive to his benevolent projects for its re-establishment in the Third Reich?

To all of this must be added the psychological element of docility in most Germans and their philosophical faith that the state is a divine institution which is not born in the people below but is sent down to them from above. Furthermore, the decade of the 1920's exposed the German people, who love security and order, to a series of rude shocks which began with the defeat of 1918 and continued through the terrors of political revolution, then economic inflation, to the financial collapse which shook the world. The specter of Bolshevism, which had become real in 1919, still haunted the imagination of many Germans, including the pastors. Hitler, of course, conjured up this bugaboo on every occasion until he exorcised it in the burning of the Reichstag.

There was adequate reason, therefore, for many of the Protestant clergy to look upon Hitler's advent to power with the hope that the Christian church—which had been discredited ever since 1918—would once more be re-established as the spiritual cornerstone of the German nation. As the next best thing to the security provided by a Christian monarchy, German ministers were constrained to accept the Austrian corporal at his face value in the hope that his strong methods would solve all church problems both immediate and historical; in fact, he might bring back the Hohenzollerns.

The outlook for the first few months of Hitler's first year was indeed not unfavorable to the church despite the preponderant and disproportionate influence of the Nazi "German Christians" who felt that Hitler's political victory gave them a subsidiary right of conquest in matters pertaining to the church. Skirmishes between this latter group and the group which opposed the subordination of Christianity to National Socialism took place almost at once—principally

in the matter of the election of a Reich bishop who would be the church Fuehrer—but open war did not break out until a new Reichskirche had actually been established and recognized by the Reichstag.

The new constitution which was drawn up in a regular manner by the representative German Evangelical Church Federation (founded in 1922) was adopted without difficulty on July 11, 1933, and was formerly recognized by the Reichstag three days later. The most important feature, for our purposes, was the provision for a Lutheran Reich Bishop to be the "visible expression of the coherent church life in the Landeskirchen." The old Federation had been headed by an executive council whose president was automatically the President of the Prussian Union which was and is the largest of the Landeskirchen. The new bishop, however, was to be elected by a Reich Synod. In this manner the movement for national church unity—envisioned for one hundred years by Fichte and others—became reality, but with the clear understanding that the church was not a state-church except for the financial and legal ties which have already been described. Nevertheless, far-sighted churchmen saw that an equilibrium had not yet been reached because the church was faced with a total state—not a Republic or a monarchy—and it remained to be seen whether even a semblance of spiritual independence could be maintained in view of the pressure of the "German Christians" to identify the new church completely with the new regime.

Hitler had indicated his friendly attitude toward both Christian churches—Protestant and Catholic—in a speech before the first Reichstag in the famous old Garrison Church at Potsdam on March 21, less than two months after his acceptance of the chancellorship of the Reich. He said that his government looked upon the two churches as "most vital factors in the survival" of the nation and that "their rights shall not be infringed." "Our aim," he stated, "is the genuine interrelation of church and state." He did not publicly say anything further on the subject until July 22, when, after the ratification of the new Church Constitution, he

openly advocated the election of Chaplain Ludwig Mueller to the new position of Reich Bishop, thus stampeding the electorate into voting only for "German Christian" delegates to the September Synod and scandalizing both the neutral and the anti-Nazi church leaders who welcomed nationalization of the church but not the "national-socialization" of Christianity.

The "German Christian" movement had been organized only a year before by a number of clergymen who thought they saw in the National Socialist movement a great opportunity for a revival of the Christian faith which unquestionably was dormant if not moribund. Some of these men, as it turned out, were more Nazi than Christian while others were more Christian than Nazi. The latter soon dropped away and the former eventually—that is, after the Nazi party proved itself to be indubitably anti-Christian—drifted out of the church altogether or lost all influence both in the church and in the party. However, at the time of Hitler's advent to power they were a force to be reckoned with because they naturally enjoyed official favor. Their stronghold was located in Thuringia in central Germany—ironically enough, Luther's own country—and sometimes they were known by the name "Thuringian Christians" because of their preponderant strength in this one province. There was a valid historical reason for their concentration in this area. Many of the Thuringian pastors were young, hot-blooded nationalists whose rabid patriotism had got them into trouble in other German provinces and caused them to drift gradually into this highly industrialized region where they were not penalized for their political views, probably because the Thuringian church was a comparatively recent organization of several very small churches and had no strong ecclesiastical tradition. So, when Hitler came along, he found that the Thuringian church had been thoroughly conditioned to chauvinistic nationalism and was ripe and ready to receive him. Between 1926 and 1933 the "Christian Nazis" raised the number of their elected delegates to the



provincial synod from three to sixteen, thus demonstrating their growing strength in a very practical way. The total number of seats in 1933 was only fifty-one.

When the Thuringian churchmen and their colleagues of like mind wanted to give organized expression to their movement, they decided in 1932 to call themselves "Evangelical National Socialists" and asked Hitler's permission to adopt the title. Hitler rejected the proposal, however, ostensibly because of its mixed political and spiritual implications, and suggested as an alternative the name "German Christians" which became their trademark. They went to work with typically National Socialistic ardor to put the whole German Church on the Fuehrer's bandwagon.<sup>3</sup> Their methods were exactly like those of a political machine. Church papers of early 1933 carried long articles on the irresponsibility of the Nazi Christians because they used church services for their demonstrations, rallying the Storm Troopers to attend in their uniforms and prevent, if possible, the attendance of anti-Nazis. The Catholic churches finally forbade the Brown Shirts to enter the building, but the Protestants were reluctant to pass any rules regarding wearing apparel because, it was sometimes said, many Nazis do not have other "go-to-meeting" clothes. There were even detailed descriptions of the expulsion of Nazi pastors from their churches and open criticisms of party literature and leaders in the church papers. To re-read those papers which are only a few years old is to be transported into another world, before the regime strengthened its grip on the press and the voice of the people.

A few Nazi church leaders gradually emerged, including two or three provincial bishops but, when Hitler moved into the Chancellery, Chaplain Ludwig Mueller, an old friend of the Fuehrer's, became the channel of communication

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Macfarland's observation regarding the German Christians is keen: "That there is lack of close thinking on the part of this group in the area of principle is obvious. When it comes to action, however, they seem to think very clearly and act effectively. In organization, propaganda, and force they follow the lines of Hitler himself." *The New Church in the New Germany*, p. 118.

between the German Christians and the Fuehrer, who about two months later made him an official liaison officer in all ecclesiastical matters. Mueller had no qualifications for this position of great responsibility except his ardent advocacy of the National Socialist movement which he had joined in 1926, but he was soon acknowledged by *all* German churchmen to be the Fuehrer's "delegate" in religious affairs. In this capacity he played an increasingly important part in the "German Christian" movement which assembled in Berlin in April for a convention. Shortly thereafter Hitler appointed him "Protector" of the "German Christians" and when the president of the regular Church Federation called a committee (consisting of himself as chief of the United Prussian Church, Bishop Marahrens as dean of the Lutherans, and Dr. Hess as representative of the Reformed Church) to lay plans for the unification of German Protestantism, he felt constrained to invite Mueller's co-operation. Mueller joined the committee in May and when it became known that the new constitution, to be acted on in July, would provide for a Reich bishop, he allowed himself—contrary to his own promises—to be proposed by his German Christian backers as candidate for the office.

This move was obviously premature and it occasioned anger and even panic among the conservative churchmen who had only a limited acquaintance with political steam-rollers. The representatives of the Church Federation, including all factions save the German Christians, immediately proposed a much more suitable man, Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, head of the great Christian social project near Bielefeld, as their candidate and elected him as their bishop. The pre-election rivalry of the two groups in Prussia became so heated that the state, in the person of Dr. Rust, State Minister of Cults, stepped in, which made matters worse. He was called off almost at once but his intervention was successful in forcing von Bodelschwingh's resignation.

The details of these remarkable proceedings have not only been recorded by Dr. Macfarland in his book on the German Church but they have been brilliantly reproduced by Kress-

man Taylor whose *Until That Day* is a true narrative of the Protestant struggle in its effect upon a conservative community and upon a preacher's son who was studying for the ministry and has since come to the United States. The capitulation of eminent professors on the theological faculty at the University of Berlin, for instance, has been vividly and accurately described in the latter book.

The next fact to be recorded in our calendar of events is the nationwide election of July which was to select by popular ballot the delegates to the General Synod. The entire membership of the Evangelical church was called upon to indicate by its choice of delegates its desires regarding the man who was to be their national bishop. In other words the delegates were by the fact of their election committed to vote for a specific man. Thus the national election was more important than the synod itself. The Confessionals, who had not ceased to campaign, would undoubtedly have won a majority of delegates if it had not been for Hitler who on the eve of election day made a radio broadcast endorsing the German Christian party and their candidate. This was the cap on the climax of wholehearted Nazi support in the campaign in which all propaganda devices were placed at the disposal of the Nazi Christians. It was, therefore, inevitable that an intimidated electorate should send a preponderance of German Christians to the September convention at Wittenberg where Mueller's election—right in Luther's own town—would be assured. When September came there was no hullabaloo connected with the Synodical assembly because all Nazi eyes were focused on the colossal Harvest Home Festival at Bueckeberg; nevertheless the Mueller victory was of decisive importance and the Nazis knew it. Hitler's Christians lost no time in pressing their advantage by cleaning house.

There were two chief reasons for the indignation which flamed up throughout the Reich against the new bishop and his German Christians. In the first place, it was keenly felt that the Christians in Germany had been stampeded into

placing in the church's highest office a man who had no real qualifications for it. Secondly, it was now seen that certain Nazi measures—like the Aryan laws—were going to be sponsored by the new leaders of the church without reference to Christian doctrine.

The pious protestations of the Reich Bishop as to the unviolated Christian character of the church tradition carried little weight in view of the fact that the Prussian Synod passed resolutions stating its unqualified approval of the Nazi state and extending the Aryan test to all pastors and church officials in order to eliminate converted Jews from positions of authority. It could not be denied that a religious crisis was at hand. The more outspoken opponents of the German Christians who had banded together in the spring of 1933 to defend the church against the danger of complete "Nazification" now began to make their weight felt. Their opposition movement, first called "New Reformation Movement" and later the "Confessional Church," gathered adherents far more rapidly than did Mueller and by late autumn it was obvious that the "Reibi" (*Reichsbischof*) had very little popular support. In November the Aryan law, hastily adopted by a few provincial churches, was revoked just as hastily by the national body under pressure which will soon be described, but no positive action against anti-Semitism has ever been undertaken by any ecclesiastical organization, except the unofficial and unrecognized "Confessional" church.

The Confessional leaders had foreseen in April the action which the German Christians would take if they ever obtained sufficient power. At their Berlin convention the Nazi Christians had let it be known that the new Reichskirche would have to live in compliance with Hitlerian doctrine. But it had not been expected that they would be able to seize power so quickly and carry their program into effect so abruptly. Few people in Germany—least of all, the conservative clergy—had even the remotest notion of the tempo which would characterize the events that Hitler would undertake in the years to come. After all, Hindenburg

was still President; anti-Semitism had hardly got beyond the stage of ugly talk and empty threats; and only a few children belonged to the Hitler Youth.

The Confessional Front first defended itself against the introduction of the Aryan standard for the clergy and church officials. In September, Pastor Niemoeller drew up a vow for the Pastor's Emergency League which ran as follows:

1. I engage to execute my office as Minister of the Word, holding myself bound to the Holy Scriptures and to the Confessions of the Reformation as the true exegesis of the Holy Scriptures.

2. I engage to protest, irrespective of the sacrifice involved, against every violation of this Confessional position.

3. I hold myself responsible to the utmost of my ability for those who are persecuted on account of this Confessional position.

4. Under this vow I testify that a violation of the Confessional position is perpetrated by the application of the Aryan paragraph within the Church of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

But it wasn't until November 13, 1933—the day after 93.3 per cent of all Germans had voted full approval of Hitler's work since he took over the chancellorship—that the Christian public became aroused to the danger which faced the church in Nazi hands. A Dr. Reinhardt Krause, Berlin District Leader of the German Christians, addressed a mass meeting of twenty thousand *Deutsche Christen* in the Sportpalast in Berlin and advocated the elimination of the Old Testament and a revision of the New Testament. By the time he had finished with Christianity nothing was left but the name Jesus superimposed on the Aryan ideal of a fighting hero. Not Palestine, but Germany, was to be the Holy Land. Krause laid the basis of the true *Volkskirche* in the slogan: "One People, One Reich, One Faith." He stated that divine revelation comes through blood and soil, and service to the state is service to God. At the same session resolutions were drawn up requiring the undivided loyalty of

<sup>4</sup> *Cross and Swastika*, Dr. Arthur Frey, pp. 143-144, Student Christian Movement Press, London.

all German pastors to National Socialism, the universal adoption of the Aryan paragraph by all Church governments, the establishment of a separate Christian church for Jews, and the proclamation of a Germanic Jesus.

The popular reaction to this speech and the resolutions—despite careful suppression of open press comment—was so great that Mueller was forced to suspend Krause, disband his own "Spiritual Council," and accede to all the demands of an indignant church, except that of submitting his own resignation. The Pastor's Emergency League, with Niemöller as its champion, sprang to action and for a while it looked as though the German Christians would be wiped out of existence. Many adherents of the Nazi Christian movement now had their eyes opened to its real nature and they left it at once.

But the Deutsche Christen were not defeated and Mueller's power was not completely broken, although it was obvious now that he could never hope to unite the church. On December 19, the Reich bishop, after having made only a pretence of protecting the Evangelical Youth Organizations which had been entrusted to his care, placed the entire group—representing 700,000 youngsters—in the hands of the Reich Youth Leader, Baldur von Schirach, who was and is an open follower of Alfred Rosenberg. That, too, caused consternation and open criticism among the more moderate German Christians as well as among the irate Confessionals. The Nazi Christian movement never really recovered from this series of blows which deprived it of its spiritual marrow. The men who were left in it were Nazis rather than Christians.

Dr. Macfarland quotes a responsible church official as estimating in October that, "of approximately 20,000 pastors, there appeared to be 2,500 or more in each group (namely, Confessionals and German Christians), the other 15,000 not having aligned themselves definitely enough to be designated as belonging to either camp."<sup>5</sup> By the time I became Pastor

<sup>5</sup> *The New Church and the New Germany*, p. 137.

of the Berlin Church in 1936, this estimate—by responsible men—was two thousand German Christians and six thousand Confessionals. It is more difficult to estimate the proportion of Confessionals and German Christians among the laity, but there is little doubt that the number of Nazi Christians was at first very much larger than the number of Niemöller's followers because the danger in which the church stood was not so apparent to the man in the pew as it was to the man in the pulpit. Besides, the one-sided election propaganda had led most Germans, especially those who were religiously indifferent, to agree that the Nazi idea was a good one. In short, the vast mass of people were not yet aware of the issues about which the men at the top were fighting.

Apparently it was at this time, namely, between October and December, 1933, that the Nazi party, including Hitler, began to see that the Evangelical church would never become the completely docile instrument which the new regime would have liked to possess. It must be left for future analysts, who have painstakingly sifted more facts than are now available, to decide whether or not Hitler's first professions of goodwill were sincere or whether he was merely using the same time-saving policy in dealing with the church that he used in his political plans, as, for instance, in concluding his treaty with Pilsudski's Poland. I think it is more likely that he simply never thought of Christianity, especially the German Church, as a serious threat to the realization of his political dreams. His superficial references to religion in *Mein Kampf* indicate that he had never really grasped its historical importance or fundamental significance in the life of a people. If this is true, he may well have felt himself to have been deliberately betrayed and his work sabotaged by a few Christian reactionaries who put ecclesiastical "bickerings" above national solidarity.

There is no doubt that the Nazis feel themselves to have been very badly repaid for their rescue of Christianity from sure death at the hands of the Communists. Reich Minister Frank who became governor of what is left of Poland said in Hamburg several years ago: "The confessional agitators

should be thankful that confessional practice is still on the whole possible in Germany, for there would be no more confessions if Adolf Hitler had not been victorious. Every decent church practice is quite specially protected by the law in Germany, but every abuse is likewise condemned by the law. Germany is determined finally to emerge from the confessional conflicts. Anyone who attempts to build up a secondary power in Germany is sinning against the spirit of the new Germany. Let no one think of setting up a new paganism. But it will not be possible in the future to adulterate National Socialist ideology in the minds of our youth by the roundabout method of confessional appeals. The German nation has finally understood, from the experiences of two thousand years, that it is not a confession that decides the fate of Germany, but a political movement for the unity of the people."

Regardless of Dr. Frank's estimate of Christianity and the attitude which he thought Christians should adopt toward the new "messiah," it was quite obvious to the most impartial observer that Nazism had developed a perceptible animosity toward the church before Hitler had been in power one year. An attempt had been made to excuse some of the first unfriendly actions instituted against the Christian cause by asserting that religion ought not to be exploited for political purposes. Indeed, this excuse is still used by the antagonists of Christianity who do not appear to realize that their contention is wearing rather thin. Practically everybody in Germany admits that religion should not concern itself with politics, but nobody in the government seems to have thought of the reverse aspect of this proposition, namely, that politics ought not to concern itself with religion.

The Nazis had gained credence for their pretensions of suppressing only the political aspects of Christianity by absorbing the Christian labor unions into the all-embracing German Labor Front and by dissolving the Catholic Zentrum and the Christian Socialist parties in favor of a one-party system; but those who were inclined to be skeptical of Hitler's purely political aims found food for thought in the lack of



hesitation which the regime had shown in assuming control of the Prussian Synod and in forcing von Bodelschwingh's resignation. All these things had happened in the spring of 1933, and in November Rudolph Hess declared, as Deputy Fuehrer of the Nazi party, that National Socialists were not obliged to adhere to any particular religious confession. This was a very significant declaration which might mean any number of things, but which very definitely did not mean that the new government was pleased with its national church. Instead of bringing a religious peace to the Third Reich, Hitler had brought religious strife.

The Reichskirche could not have had a more inauspicious beginning, although it probably will outlive the regime which forced its birth. Its first years have been a struggle for life. Regardless of the new constitution the whole religious situation within the nation deteriorated rapidly during the first year until it seriously threatened the very political unity which it was supposed to foster. It cannot be said that Hitler did not recognize the danger and attempt to avert it. During the next year and until 1937 special efforts were made to salvage religious peace; but those efforts were doomed to failure because the men in power were incapable of understanding the basic issues of the question. Many stupid mistakes similar to Mueller's election were made; the chief of them in 1934 was the public appointment of Alfred Rosenberg, a rabid anti-Christian, to be the official philosopher and spiritual overseer of the Nazi party which was ostensibly committed to "positive Christianity."

In summing up the results of the first year of struggle, however, it may be said that the Confessionals had won a major victory over the German Christians even though they had lost the episcopal election. Owing to the awkwardness of Mueller and the stupidity of his supporters, such as Krause, many pastors and laymen had abandoned the German Christian movement. But unfortunately the Confessionals were about to make mistakes too which were destined to alienate many of the cautious neutrals who sympathized

with Niemoeller's aims but could not reconcile themselves to his methods. Thus three factions developed where there should have been only two, as a result of which the confusion prevailing in the complex church situation became, if anything, more confounded. Only one thing was certain, namely, that the new regime was interested in the church merely as a political instrument for strengthening its own power over the nation. Whether the government's intentions—beneath its political opportunism—were really honorable was a question which only time could tell. From our perspective today it is easy to see which way events were tending, but at that time not even Niemoeller whose eyesight was unusually keen could have foreseen everything as it was going to happen. This fact must be kept constantly in mind when reviewing the history of those years.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Church Struggle: 1934-1936*

BY THE end of Hitler's first year as chancellor, the main lines of the church struggle had been laid down, but the issues which were involved had not received the clarification which was necessary for a solution of the problem. Moreover, it could not be hoped that the issues would be clarified as long as the government had its heart set upon trying to conceal all indications of internal disunity from the outside world. In December of that very first year Dr. Frick, Minister of the Interior, ordered all newspapers and magazines—excepting specifically religious periodicals—to refrain from publishing religious news, thus giving additional indication of the government's admission of defeat in its first attempt to "co-ordinate" Christianity. The religious press itself was strictly controlled and, save for pro-Nazi publications, it gradually declined in effectiveness owing to confiscations and suppressions until June, 1941, when, ostensibly on account of paper shortage, it was virtually wiped out of existence.

In other words, the church struggle was pushed underground in 1933 and there it has stayed from that day to this. Readers of American newspapers must try to realize that of all the news brought to them about the religious situation in Germany not one word has been published within the Reich except for a few ministerial edicts, some oblique references to refractory pastors, and a vast amount of vicious abuse ladled out freely by anti-Christian Nazis! This policy of strangulation has been very clear. Visitors could stay in Germany for months without even hearing of new nationwide measures concerning the church. When they inquired about religious conditions, they were simply told to look about them: everything was tranquil and on Sundays the church bells rang as usual. Sometimes even I, who was in

very close touch with the German clergy, did not learn of important steps until days or weeks after the event, and frequently I obtained a complete picture of what had happened in various corners of Germany only by piecing together dozens of reports including data which had returned to Berlin via Geneva, London, or New York!

Essentially, the regime was trying to pretend that the church problem did not exist because, according to the Nazis, it ought not to exist. Sometimes it was represented as a purely political fight between ecclesiastical factions for the control of the new church government in which the government was acting only as a benevolent referee to prevent heads from being broken. Again, taking an opposite tack, the Brown Shirts who virtuously abstained from interfering with theological doctrines claimed that the church need only to signify its allegiance to Hitler and it would not be molested further. Why fight over a Jew? There was no doubt in the Nazi mind of the utter unimportance of the religious question in comparison with the political revolution and the emergence of the Third Reich. "Hitler has become so big and Jesus Christ so small!"

This was the attitude of the Reibi who had no conception of the spiritual crisis which he was provoking in the Christian church and who would never have found anything particularly obnoxious in the Krause speech of the previous November, if the whole of Christendom had not arisen to denounce it. A sure indication of Mueller's reaction to spiritual values was given in his proclamation of January, 1934, "forbidding the use of religion in party polemics." He thought he could settle the whole matter by disbanding the German Christians, now that he was sure of the government's backing. It was a noble gesture but at the same time an announcement was made that severe penalties would be incurred by anyone who criticized the present church government. Outspoken pastors were threatened with suspension.

But the Lutheran pastors of the Confessional church spoke out in a declaration which was read from their pulpits on the Sunday after Mueller's announcement.

Before God and this Christian community, we protest against the fact that the Reichsbischof with his ordinances seriously menaces the authority of those who in the name of their conscience and their community cannot look on in silence at the havoc that is going on in the Church, and also against the fact that he has put in force fresh laws which are hostile to the Faith . . . Even in our dealings with the Reichsbischof we observe the command: You must obey God rather than men . . .

Hitler was forced to take cognizance of this open flare-up and thereby took occasion to redeem the promise which he gave Dr. Charles Macfarland of the American Federal Council of Churches who made representations to the chancellor on behalf of the German Church in October, asking him to "secure a hearing for the opposition and listen to both groups." Hitler had replied that he would be glad to do so but, unless invited, he would not act as intermediary.

Now the Fuehrer received the representatives of the opposition. Leo Stein, the author of *I was in Hell with Niemoeller*, gives January 5, 1934, as the date of the Dahlem pastor's last interview with the Fuehrer. Stein's graphic account of Niemoeller's plea for religious freedom and Hitler's blunt refusal based on his inability to understand the issue is substantially correct. I have heard Niemoeller describe his disappointment which was all the greater because in two previous conversations with Hitler before the Nazis came to power, the Leader had given the delegations, of which Niemoeller was a part, full assurance of his goodwill toward the church.

The upshot of this January meeting was that the more moderate churchmen expressed their willingness to make further attempts at co-operation with the Reich Bishop, whereas Niemoeller and the Pastor's Emergency League publicly proclaimed their entire disapproval of Mueller's works and ways. In retaliation Niemoeller's house was searched and all papers relating to the Emergency League were confiscated, but a laconic communiqué was issued by the Chancellery to the effect that the leaders of the German Evangelical Church had been received by Hitler and had

given both him and the Reibi a vote of confidence and pledge of support.

The bumptious optimism of Nazi propaganda in claiming the wholehearted support of all Germans in everything Hitler does is too well-known to require comment. Their motto is, "Save the surface and you save all." Nevertheless the unhappy Mueller, whom Dr. Macfarland credits with a sincere desire to achieve a genuine peace, was forced to continue laboring at his impossible and thankless task while the Confessional and German Christian parties, owing to the growing predominance of impatient radical elements in them, drifted farther apart. At Eastertime he attempted a reconciliation, but the Emergency League would have none of it and said so on April 5. They based their rejection on the fact that the new church government had countenanced the increasing arrogation of authority over church affairs by political agencies. It was clear that the League was rapidly approaching the point of denouncing the whole new superstructure of the German Evangelical Church which was not yet a year old.

These declarations were followed by the first Reich Synod of the Confessional Church at Wuppertal-Barmen from May 29-31, 1934. They were portentous days, reminiscent of the Reformation years four centuries ago. The meaning of the word "Confessional" as a description of the new movement was given concrete definition through the Synod's unqualified adherence to the ancient Christian heritage of faith without Nazi improvements. "Bekennntnis" to these men had never meant merely the acknowledgement of guilt, as persons listening to the English translation of the word "confession" might suppose: it meant affirmation of the central Gospel truth in the early Christian sense of the declaration "I believe!" The thought behind it was positive, not negative. And, the implication of this confession was that the "confessor" was staking his very life on his faith in Christ as over against the faith of the German Christians in Adolf Hitler.

The Synod took direct issue with the Reich Bishop's attitude. "In opposition to the attempts to unify the German Evangelical Church by means of false doctrine, by the use of force, and of the insincere practices, the Confessional Synod declares: The unity of the Evangelical Churches in Germany can only come into being from the Word of God in faith through the Holy Spirit. Only so does the Church become renewed."

The Synod did not disavow the new constitutional basis of the German Evangelical Church but it claimed that the unity attained the previous July was now seriously imperiled by the methods and doctrines of the German Christian minority which had seized control of the organization, and it was "left to God to determine what this signifies for the interrelations of the Confessional Churches."

From here the assembly proceeded to expose certain German Christian errors:

1. We reject the false doctrine that the Church might and must acknowledge as sources of its proclamation, except and beside this one Word of God, still other events, powers, forms, and truths as God's revelation.

2. We reject the false doctrine that there are realms of our life in which we belong not to Jesus Christ, but to other masters, realms where we do not need to be justified and sanctified by Him.

3. We reject the false doctrine that the Church is permitted to form its message or its order according to its own desire or according to prevailing philosophical or political convictions.

4. We reject the false doctrine that the Church is able or at liberty apart from this ministry to give itself, or to accept, special "leaders" equipped with power to rule.

5. We reject the false doctrine that the State should or could go beyond its special task and become the sole and total order of human life, thus fulfilling also the Church's vocation.

We reject the false doctrine that the Church should or could go beyond its special task and assume functions and dignities of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.

6. We reject the false doctrine that the Church could

assume a human sovereignty over the Word and Work of the Lord, and place these at the service of any arbitrarily chosen wishes, aims or plans.<sup>1</sup>

Each of these rejections was preceded by a scriptural text and a brief positive statement of faith. The whole document unquestionably became the cornerstone of the Confessional church and remains so today. Frey points out that this has in it no "natural theology" which would prepare the way for "folkic" theology. As for the refinements of Lutheran and Reformed theology, the Synod left them to the respective churches; their quarrel was with state authority.

Meanwhile Mueller and his legal counsellor, Dr. Jaeger, were pursuing their heavy-handed policy of assuming direct control over all regional churches whose ecclesiastical heads would not "co-operate" with the new national administration. To those who would co-operate Jaeger spoke very plainly—at a meeting of Nazi bishops in Stuttgart—and the meaning was clear. "Gospels can be changed, they are not eternal. The German government plans to evolve a single Evangelical church. As a further objective it must eliminate gospels as such completely and do away with the religious divisions which divide the German people. The result will be a National Socialistic German Church." The German Christians were chagrined that these bright promises of a religious peace fell on the arid soil of an unappreciative people.

Only two of the regional churches besides Thuringia had been taken captive more or less completely by the German Christian movement. In other districts where the Nazi-Christian element was virtually nonexistent the old ecclesiastical administrations remained unmolested; but where a split of any dimensions had been effected the pro-German Christian Reich Bishop and the state stepped in to take charge. This happened, for longer or shorter periods of time, almost everywhere and it was this interference with the

<sup>1</sup> The quotations from the Barmen Confession are taken from Frey's *Cross and Swastika*, p. 149, which presents the church picture from the radical Confessional viewpoint of Karl Barth.



local self-government of the church especially in Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, and Hesse, which stiffened the uncompromising stand taken by the Confessionals.

The Reibi sought to achieve his ends by another means at the National Synod in August, namely, by proposing that each pastor should swear an oath of allegiance to the Fuehrer and of dedication to Germany. Maybe the alleged Roehm conspiracy which ended in the massacre of June 30 that shook the government had something to do with this. When September 23—the day set for Mueller's consecration in Berlin as Reich bishop—came, all the swastika flags were hung, but none of the pre-Hitler dignitaries of the church appeared at the service and the only Brown Shirts who came were ordered to be present. The ceremony was a mockery of everything that German Protestantism stood for. Congregations throughout the country were fully aware of what was happening and, instead of praying for their new shepherd, they were silently praying to be rid of him. As Michael Power so well describes it:

Meanwhile throughout the whole of the rest of Protestant Germany that morning the churches were packed. They had come together to pray for the true Christianity that was being threatened by a false. They heard their pastors inveigh once more against a 'hybrid Nordic Christian religion.' Never before in history can the nominal head of a Church have been solemnly invested with the trappings of his high office while the vast majority of his followers were gathered elsewhere praying that their Church might be saved from his activities! It was a peculiar situation."<sup>2</sup>

Mueller's title of office was an empty symbol of defeat. The forces which were to make his office meaningless had already laid plans to assume authority. As one looks back over the unhappy man's career, the only really memorable event one sees is his christening of the Goering baby. That was as far as he got in the promotion of the Christian cause among his Nazi brethren. True, he still wears the regalia

<sup>2</sup> *Religion in the Reich*, pp. 130-131.

but nothing much has been heard of him for several years.

In the autumn of 1934, Mueller lost both his access to Hitler and his right-hand man, Dr. Jaeger, who had written the decrees which betrayed the church into the hands of the state. Although Hitler would not see Mueller, he saw a delegation of German bishops and told them that he had washed his hands of the whole business. The bishops hoped that at last the state would withdraw from the struggle but they were wrong. By the very nature of the totalitarian idea, Hitler could not be rid of the problem unless he were to crush the church completely.

Meanwhile the Confessional church, which had taken a strong stand at Barmen in the spring, was not leaving further developments to chance. It felt that it was winning its war. In October it met again—this time at Dahlem near Berlin in Niemoeller's big *Jesus Christus Kirche*—and the fruit of its labor was the establishment on November 22, 1934, of a Provisional Church Government (*Vorläufige Kirchenleitung*) which was declared to be the legitimate representative of the German Evangelical Church. With the full support of the Council of the Confessional Church in Prussia and of the so-called "intact" Lutheran *Landeskirchen* it certainly had a majority right to its claim.

At the Dahlem Convention a declaration was drawn up which defined further the attitude of the Confessional pastors toward encroachment of the state upon the church. The first section of the document bluntly states that the Reich Church government had by its acts destroyed the Christian basis of the German Evangelical Church and deposed the Gospel, made the Reich bishop a pope, tied church officials to the church administration instead of to Christ, and, by eliminating synods, had silenced the congregations. Section two declares that all protests have been in vain because the Reich Church government is supported by political force; therefore, because of continued violations of church rights, the Synod has now passed certain emergency laws. Section three provides for a Council of Brethren to govern and

represent the Church and for a supplementary council to act as executive. Ministers and elders are urged to obey this new authority rather than the Reich Bishop. Section four provides for the transmission of this declaration to the government of the Reich and asks for official recognition.<sup>3</sup>

In itself this move was sufficiently bold, but the courage of the Confessional churchmen was running high. They dispatched a vibrant challenge to the congregations to aid in driving from the church "unrighteousness and violence, lying and heresy." The situation contained dynamite which the State had no intention of exploding. Nothing happened in the course of the winter but many events were reserved for the ensuing year. It appears that the regime did not underestimate the high inflammability of the religious situation, but the Confessional leaders seem to have underestimated the determination of the State to tame the church.

With typical German thoroughness the Confessional leaders proceeded too fast and too far in their attitude of defiance to the touchy Nazi State. Although all of their contentions were correct, their contentious manner of presenting them was indiscreet. The fact that the judgment of the Nazis, who had always maintained that it was a waste of time to try to reconcile the new movement with the old faith, seemed to be justified was not so lamentable as the alienation of many Christians who still believed implicitly in Hitler's essential goodwill toward the church. Sooner or later the showdown with the Nazis was bound to come but it might have been better if the showdown had come later, that is, after the intentions of the regime regarding religion had been fully revealed to the rest of the churchmen. Today there are still a few Germans who imagine that Niemoeller and his Confessional colleagues are to a large extent responsible for gradual predominance of anti-Christian elements in the government. Be that as it may, the Lutheran bishops in 1935 upon the basis of Hitler's assurances felt justified in making a second attempt to live peaceably with the Reich

<sup>3</sup> Frey, *Cross and Swastika* contains full text of the declaration, pp. 180-183.

government which had acceded to their requests to jettison the Reibi.

Therefore, when the Confessional church radicals tried to force the issue in February by sending an ultimatum to Reich Minister of the Interior, Dr. Frick, demanding an end of state interference in provincial church administration, the Lutheran bishops were dismayed at the reckless temerity of the move. And when, in the following month, the same leaders caused a proclamation to be read in the churches violently denouncing the "German Faith" movement, the doctrine of Blood and Soil, and the paganization of the press, the conservative elements in the Provisional Church government drew away from the radicals, doing inestimable damage to the common cause. The split was not healed for two years and then only partially.

The state's reaction to the bellicose proclamation denouncing a loyal Nazi movement was to arrest seven hundred pastors and send agents of the Gestapo to warn five thousand others, which, incidentally, confirms the estimates of the strength of the whole Confessional movement at this time and of its growth in a few brief months. The "German Faith" movement's reaction was to organize a huge demonstration in the Berlin Sportpalast—a Nazi concession available only to Nazi rallies—on April 25. The attendant publicity was blatant. The theme was, as usual, "a third religion for the Third Reich," that is, Blood and Soil instead of Catholic or Protestant Christianity. By the following month a new law was proclaimed placing all legal questions relating to church affairs directly under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. Thus, the Confessional church had inadvertently extended the very abuses that it was trying to curb and abolish.

When time came for the assembly of another Reich Synod in Augsburg in June, 1935, the conservative element of the Provisional Church government was in full control owing to the sobering effect which the arrests and new measures had had upon the radicals. While maintaining silence regard-

ing the new measures instituted by the state, there was a general feeling that state mediation was needed to re-establish peace among the churches, and the state responded to the appeal on July 17 by appointing Reich Minister (without portfolio) Hans Kerrl to be Reich Minister for Church Affairs. This looked good but three days later Dr. Frick, Minister of the Interior, ordered the Landeskirchen to restrain their youth groups from wearing uniforms, from marching in closed formation in public, and from engaging in field sports. This was the manner in which the action of the Augsburg Synod approving the Reibi's surrender of the church youth to the Reich Youth Leader was rewarded, and it showed the true extent of the regime's desire to reach a peaceful settlement.

Hitler's appointment of Dr. Kerrl inaugurated the Nazi state's second attempt to co-ordinate the church, and it represents a departure from anything that the church had ever had in the way of leadership. Under the Empire there were, as we have seen, Ministers of Cults who had charge of religion and education in their relation to the various local governments within the Reich; but these officials, besides being selected for their sympathetic attitude toward Christianity as the religion of the state, were subject to the ruler as the *summus episcopus* of the church. Even under the Republic, when the Ministry of Cults was changed to the Ministry of Popular Education, Science, and Art, the essential work of the Ministry for all practical purposes remained unchanged. In any event the minister had no authority over the church's own government and it was not until Dr. Rust became Minister of Popular Education, Science, and Art under Hitler that he carried over some of his authority into church affairs—as Prussian Minister of Cults—by appointing church staffs in some of the districts where trouble with the “German Christians” first began.<sup>4</sup> At some undetermined time the church question

<sup>4</sup> May 1, 1934, is the official date of the founding of the Reich Ministry for Wissenschaft, Erziehung, and Volksbildung which took the place of the Ministry for Kunst, Wissenschaft, and Volksbildung. Along with this office went the Prussian Ministry of Cults, the name of which, so far as I know, was not changed.

was taken out of his hands and assigned to Dr. Frick as Minister of the Interior in his capacity as chief of German police until Himmler, in turn, relieved him of that job and of the disciplining of the church as well.

Thus for the first time under Kerrl the church came into a Ministry of its own, but at a time when all legal powers had been signed away to the Ministry of the Interior and when all real power of any kind had been assumed by a political movement which did not believe in letting anybody mind his own business. Furthermore, the church itself was now hopelessly divided on the question of primary allegiance to Caesar or to God, thus rendering the best intentions of any Ministry abortive. No Minister of Cults had ever faced a problem like that.

Dr. Kerrl, a cautious lawyer, made a careful start and succeeded in at least one thing: he prevented a consolidation of the Christian Front by holding out the hope of church peace on a basis which would satisfy the conservative churchmen belonging to both the Confessionals and the German Christians. It might be wrong to impute dishonesty and double-dealing to the minister. From all appearances, he sincerely tried to mediate a peace but, like Hitler, he simply could not grasp the importance of the spiritual values which were at stake and he felt a natural sympathy for the radical Nazi Christians. Like Mueller, he lasted for about two years.

In September, Kerrl advanced a suggestion which, in any other kind of state, would probably have brought about peace. He offered the church a free hand to solve its own problems by establishing a central committee composed of members upon whose integrity and good faith everybody could depend, at the head of which would be a clergyman—not a lawyer—of unimpeachable standing. It was an offer that the conservatives, especially the Lutherans who had a deep-seated veneration for state authority, felt they could not afford to refuse. In a way, it was almost like a return to the pre-Mueller days when von Bodelschwingh had been chosen bishop.

In October, Dr. Zoellner—a man of Confessional sym-

pathies who satisfied all the specifications—was appointed to head this *Reichskirchenausschuss* which was given two years to bring peace to the churches. At this move even the radicals of the Confessional Front were temporarily silenced although some of them refused to believe that any good would come of it. They pointed, Cassandra-like, to the law promulgated on September 24th “for the safeguarding of the German Evangelical Church” which empowered the Reich Minister to issue ordinances with binding legal force, presumably without sanction of the Ministry of the Interior. It is interesting and indicative to note, by the way, that on October 4, namely, the day after the RKA was officially born, Dr. Frick issued an order that churches were to use only the swastika flag on national holidays and other occasions. When I first went to Germany in 1934 I noted that as many as three different flags sometimes flew from church towers and that sometimes the swastika was absent altogether. Inevitably the net of state restriction was drawing more closely about the church.

Yet the Nazis, as usual, made a show of launching their new plan with an ingenuous bid for world sympathy. Ambassador Dodd noted in his diary on October 16 that he went to a tea at the Kaiserhof Hotel to hear the newly appointed Minister for Church Affairs explain the party attitude toward the Evangelical churches. Many prominent people were present, he wrote, and Kerrl spoke for an hour and a half. This was his abstract of the talk: “The Nazi party members are the true Christians of Germany and all church folk must ultimately become Nazi Christians. Kerrl argued that Hitler had done for modern civilization what Copernicus had done when he discovered proof that the world was round, not flat as all Christians then believed. All the world, he said, would ultimately accept the Hitler idea as ‘our ancestors had ultimately accepted Copernicus.’ He preached a sermon calling upon us all to surrender to the new discovery. In my opinion, three-fourths of the audience did not treat seriously what had been said.”

Ambassador Dodd elsewhere described himself as a non-

active church member. He attended the American Church only occasionally, though with greater frequency in the last months he was in Berlin. Yet his published diary shows his increasing awareness of the importance of the church struggle, despite the fact that he did not fully appreciate its significance. His reaction to Kerrl's speech is genuine but it is a shame that Dr. Zoellner and the neutral churchmen could not have heard it. But maybe they too would not have taken it seriously.

As it was, this RKA committee went to work in earnest and—so they thought—with a full recognition of the difficulties. It may be said that Dr. Zoellner gave his life for the church inasmuch as he died of a broken heart shortly after his acknowledgment of defeat which came about eighteen months after first taking charge. A preliminary declaration made by the committee<sup>5</sup> went fairly far in subscribing to the national rebirth “brought about by National Socialism on the basis of race, blood and soil,” but it made no bones about its faith in the job of the church to proclaim “the message of Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen, our Lord, the Saviour and Redeemer of all peoples and races.”

Two questions arose in the minds of the radical Confessionals, as Dr. Frey points out: first, could any compromise be made with the Nazi philosophy of race, blood, and soil? Secondly, could the RKA, appointed by the state, be considered an organ of the Christian church? The men who had drawn up the Barmen Confession said no and proceeded to act accordingly. The Provisional Church government was maintained.

The next step of Dr. Kerrl was to deprive this rebellious Confessional church of its means of support by confiscating its funds and forbidding all church authorities now under the jurisdiction of the RKA to raise money for administrative purposes. The order included a prohibition against the formation of “group organizations,” meaning Confessional Synods. Both propagandizing and the special training of seminarians were proscribed. This series of orders came on

<sup>5</sup> Frey, *Cross and Swastika*, p. 162.



December 2 and closed the year 1935. No reference to the Christian nature of Christmas appeared in the daily papers and for the next six years I scanned the German press in vain to find even the most indirect mention of December 25 as a church festival. The religious significance of the day was adumbrated only in articles about the solstice or traditional Germanic customs such as the decoration of the evergreen tree. Yet the church was more a "state-church" than it had been since the days of the Kaiser.

All through 1936 the RKA struggled to solve the religious problem and produce unity in the church. It was an unhappy year. Hindenburg, who had intervened on the church's behalf, had died and Hitler had settled himself firmly in the saddle, confident at last of his own unassailable strength. The Germans began helplessly to wonder what would happen next. They had begun to be genuinely afraid of their redoubtable leader, but they were also proud of the fact that their Deutschland was once more a power to be reckoned with. Up till 1936 their interest had been centered on internal problems ("National Socialism is no article of export"), but the year of the Olympic games turned their attention to the fact that Hitler was no longer the laughingstock of other nations.

On Monday, February 17, the Confessional Synod meeting at Oeynhausen in defiance of Kerrl declared that it could not recognize the RKA as the governing body of the German Evangelical Church. Ecclesiastical government, so far as they were concerned, still rested with the Provisional Church which had superseded the Reich Bishop who, in turn, had never resigned. However, it was agreed that the Confessional representatives on the RKA should retain their positions and continue to co-operate with the Dr. Zoellner. This uncompromising refusal to recognize the RKA alienated the Lutheran Landeskirchen still more and they struck a bargain with the RKA by which they agreed to acknowledge its legitimacy provided that no RKA subcommittees were set up in the specifically Lutheran provinces! Now the

Provisional Church executive committee had to be reorganized without the support of the moderate churchmen outside Prussia.

But all this was happening at a time when, as we have said, other events were occupying the average German mind. On February 16 the Winter Olympics had been wound up with a flourish at Garmisch-Partenkirchen. In answer to Hitler's prayer apparently, the snow, which was indispensable even to Nazi organizers, had arrived just in time for the games and it left with the guests, but the Germans enjoyed a brilliant success and began to look forward with eager anticipation to the Summer Olympics in Berlin. So far as the outside world went, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia had been successfully concluded and civil war in Spain had not yet broken out. Above all there had been those few breathtaking days after the reoccupation of the demilitarized Rhineland on March 7 by the German troops in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. The nation had always resented the thought that their own soldiers could not set foot in the western area of the country and the Rhineland felt particularly disgruntled about losing the good trade which army posts bring; but millions of terrified Germans had not the slightest doubt that the French would come pouring over the Maginot Line at this flagrant violation of the pact's provisions. The breath of relief which swept the country at that time can be compared only to the breath of relief which welcomed the Munich agreement two short years later.

It was hardly likely that the rising good temper of the nation could be spoiled by the prophetic warnings of the Confessional spoilsports, even when at Whitsuntide they addressed a scorching memorandum to the Reich Chancellor asking only one question. "Do you or do you not want to de-Christianize the church?"<sup>6</sup> Except for the sudden and inexplicable publication of the document in all German papers, after an interval of several weeks, no answer was forthcoming.

The radical Confessionals wanted to use the presence of

<sup>6</sup> Frey, *Cross and Swastika*, pp. 190 ff., gives a full account of this strong protest.

large numbers of visitors in Germany that summer to bring the religious question out into the open. Of course, the Nazis angrily supposed that these malcontents were merely trying to embarrass the government. So the plans of the Berlin churches for special services were ruthlessly blocked so far as that was possible. Large meetings were held but the simple announcements in the form of printed programs were confiscated. When an indignant pastor asked the police why these forms which contained only sermon titles were seized, an officer replied, "We need not let the world know what a pigsty exists in Germany."

In the Apostle Paul Church during those first two weeks in August there was conducted a series of the most impressive services I have ever attended in Germany. The cream of the Confessional pastors was selected to speak, beginning with Pastor Jacobi of the great Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin and ending with Pastor Niemoeller of the Dahlem Church. Other speakers were Pastor Bonhoeffer of Stettin, Professor Iwand of Koenigsberg, Pastor Asmussen of Berlin, and General Superintendent Dibelius of the Prussian Synod. These men spoke on such themes as "The Church of Christ in Germany," "The Inward Life of the German Evangelical Church," "The Rebirth of the Church," and Niemoeller's subject was "The Only Lord of the Church: Jesus Christ." Furthermore, two well-known professors from the University of Copenhagen were there to lend their support in strong speeches. The pastors of the foreign churches—Swedish, Danish, English, and others—in Berlin were invited to speak, but all of us, for obvious reasons, felt compelled to refuse, although most of us attended the meetings because of our wholehearted sympathy with the Confessional movement.

The struggle continued throughout the rest of the year without achieving any noteworthy results. Exciting things were happening however: military service was set at two years (August 24), labor service at six months (September 26), a new four-year plan had been proclaimed (September 8-14), the first one thousand kilometers of superhighways had been finished (September 29), Graf Ciano visited Berlin

(October 20) and Germany recognized the Ethiopian annexation (October 24), Hitler tore up another clause of the Versailles Treaty (November 14), and recognized Franco's Government (November 18), Germany signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan (November 25) and finally on December 1 the membership of all German youngsters in the Hitler Youth was made compulsory. Von Schirach had a conference with Hitler after the promulgation of this decree and emerged with the statement, "I leave it to the church to train her youth in religion according to her confessions and I shall never try to influence this training. On Sunday none of her children is on duty during the hours of church service. The Sunday service and other exercises of strictly religious nature prescribed by the church are not to be encroached upon." That was rather reassuring, but six weeks later the order was given for the establishment of the elite Adolf Hitler Schools which excluded all religion but the "religion of life" from the curriculum.

Had the religious problem been clarified by the events of these two years? The answer must be in the negative except in so far as more Christians, both laymen and pastors, had come to suspect that the dilatory tactics of the regime could not possibly be interpreted as indicating a genuine desire to give the church the religious peace which it was always promising. The regime really wished to impose upon the church the kind of religious peace which it thought the church ought to have. More and more the church problem had become a political problem, although both the Nazis and the Confessionals professed indignation at the very thought of religion in politics. The real reason why no proper solution could be found lay in the fact that, instead of being lanced in public, the sore was permitted—or forced—to fester under poultices of propaganda. The regime vainly hoped that the sore would quietly disappear under these applications and the church emerge from the treatment as a good Nazi organization.

So far as the churchmen themselves were concerned, a

division of opinion had become very apparent, if not exactly explicit. The old threefold division of factions remained but there was a more profound meaning read into the struggle. In fact, it became evident that an old struggle was being reborn under brand-new conditions, namely, the nineteenth-century tug-of-war between the rival concepts of "Volkskirche" and "Bekenntniskirche." The former term expressed the desire for a united national church which would embrace all Christians, sometimes only all Protestants, in Germany regardless of confessional differences. This Volkskirche was to a certain extent realized in the Prussian Union which has already been referred to. The latter term, on the other hand, bespoke the viewpoint of those who could not and would not close their eyes to major doctrinal differences simply for the sake of superficial unity. Americans hardly need any further definition of these two concepts because both standpoints are represented in every denomination and in every interchurch organization in the United States.

The interesting aspect of the German version today is that the stronghold of the Bekenntniskirche (Confessional church) is in Prussia where the Volkirche idea had previously expressed itself most strongly. In fact, Niemoeller took the very name to express supreme allegiance to Christian creeds, despite the underlying longing of all Germans to be united in one national body which would be popular in the true sense of the word. In short, it had become a battle between those who were Germans first (not merely Nazis) and Christians afterward and those who were Christians first and Germans afterward. The conservatives were sympathetic to strict subscription to Christian doctrine, because their particular Landeskirchen were strongly Lutheran; but they likewise feared that a pronounced Confessional movement without the counterweight of a "peoples' church" movement would eventually result in the sort of crumbling denominationalism which characterized American Christianity in the days when everybody felt free to found his own peculiar sect. On the other hand, the conservatives did not want a

Nazified Volkskirche whose Bible would be *Mein Kampf*. And there the issue hung.

The years 1934-1936 were futile years of sparring, testing, waiting; the best that can be said of this period is that it drove the whole German clergy to review its position, collectively and individually, in the face of a new political force which was bent on synchronizing every national institution in a totalitarian state. By the time the clergy had taken stock of the situation and had come to the point of getting ready for action, the time for action was past. This is the key to an understanding of the next two years of the church struggle. Actually, however, there is no special reason for bisecting this four-year period except that shorter chapters usually make for easier reading. The tug-of-war between the two concepts of the church has not been settled even yet. It is true, however, that the conflict between church and state took a new turn, largely because National Socialism began to assume a form which ought to have been anticipated but which seemed to surprise almost everybody.

## CHAPTER IX

### *The Church Struggle: 1937-1939*

THE tempo of events was becoming increasingly swift and the church issue was slowly but surely sinking beneath the flood of other questions which everything that Hitler did provoked. It was obvious that the Zoellner Committee had bogged down badly because of the painfully clear hostility of the regime to any suitable settlement of the religious problem. Kerrl was manifestly playing along with the German Christian minority and had appointed as his assistant in the Ministry for Church Affairs a Dr. Muhs who, like Mueller's right-hand man, Dr. Jaeger, believed in using force. The Confessional group responded by making one last effort to carry the fight into the open before the rising tide of international troubles smothered completely the strangled cry of German Christendom.

The year 1937 was in many ways the church struggle's most eventful year, during the course of which 806 Confessionals, mostly pastors, were arrested. It began with the arrest of nine pastors in Luebeck who bucked the German Christian church government there. Then the ministerial students of the Confessional church were expelled from the University of Berlin for supplementing their studies at a "secret" seminary. Himmler had not been able to padlock enough doors to keep the Confessional classes from meeting, so Dr. Rust deprived them of the state diploma without which they could never become pastors. Next, the big revival meetings which the energetic Confessional pastors had been organizing were suppressed. When fifteen thousand people assembled for one such "Evangelical Week" in Essen in Western Germany, Dr. Kerrl took immediate steps to outlaw further demonstrations which might imperil the Volkskirche.

The RKA cracked up in the same month when Chairman Zoellner himself was restrained by the police from going to

visit in Luebeck where the nine pastors had been arrested. It has already been said that besides Thuringia there were two other important provinces in which the German Christians had seized control, namely, Mecklenburg and Luebeck. It has also been pointed out that the RKA, under agreement with Dr. Kerrl, was to function in those provinces where both factions were represented. But the Luebeck authorities refused to recognize the RKA and consequently the Confessional pastors there were without representation or protection. This event opened the eyes of Dr. Zoellner and on February 12 he and his RKA resigned—six months before his prescribed two years were up—declaring in a detailed letter to Kerrl that he had never received any co-operation from the Reich Ministry for Church Affairs in the matter of bringing peace to the churches and that his work had been deliberately sabotaged.

The following day Dr. Kerrl made a speech before the representatives of the Landeskirchen in which he declared that the RKA had failed in its function! Instead of bringing about the recognition of the state supremacy over the church Zoellner had tried to produce a Reformation! He, Zoellner, did not adequately emphasize Race, Blood, and Soil as the basis of the present state! Instead of respecting freedom of conscience, he set up a heresy court to judge the German Christians! Thuringia, Mecklenburg, and Luebeck were, he said, the *only* provinces where order prevails. "The party," Kerrl continued, "stands on a basis of Positive Christianity, and Positive Christianity is National Socialism . . . National Socialism is the doing of God's will . . . God's will reveals itself in German Blood . . . Dr. Zoellner and Count Galen, Bishop of Muenster (Catholic), in similar words have tried to make clear to me that Christianity consists in faith in Christ as the Son of God. That makes me laugh. No, the main thing is deeds. Christianity is not dependent upon the Apostles' Creed . . . True Christianity is represented by the party, and the German Volk are now called by the party and especially the Fuehrer to a real Christianity . . . The church has not been able to generate



the faith that moves mountains. But the Fuehrer has! The Fuehrer is the herald of a new revelation."

The long speech went on in this vein and the Lutherans could hardly believe their ears. This was the man they had been trying to work with for a year and a half! Kerl threatened them with a greater degree of state intervention and stated that the RKA would not be replaced immediately but that the local committees would continue under his direction. He made arrangements to favor the German Christians still further and promised a series of rules and regulations which would deprive the church of its last vestiges of independence.

In this fashion the Nazi State admitted that its second major attempt to co-ordinate the German Church had failed. Once more the church was without a government, except for the dictatorial powers which Kerl had given himself in September, 1935. But Kerl was not to go unanswered. General Superintendent Dibelius, one of the staunchest leaders of the Confessionals and a man of magnetic personality, sent Kerl a reply to which there was, eventually, an amusing aftermath.

Dibelius said bluntly, "The veil is torn away! For four years we have been told that the intervention of the state is concerned only with the outward life of the church. The Confessional church, however, has always maintained that that is not so, but rather that the state's church policy, beginning with Herr Jaeger and ending with the RKA, signified interference in doctrine and preaching. Your words on February 13 have shown beyond shadow of doubt that the Confessional church was right." In flaming phrases the general superintendent went on to castigate the regime, charging it with a secret desire to destroy Christianity and set up a religion of the state. Why else are the school children, who receive religious instruction in the morning, drilled in the afternoon by other teachers to say "Our Bible is *Mein Kampf*?"

The German church people did not need Dibelius's clear words to interpret Kerl's speech for them. The shock of

the Reich Minister's spiritual cynicism on their religious sensitivities had much the same effect that a bucket of ice-cold water would have on a sleepwalker. News of what the Minister had said spread like a prairie fire throughout the Reich. Just how great the shock was can be judged by the drastic action which Hitler felt forced to take at this juncture. Even though nothing of the preceding events had been reported in the daily press, the newspapers of February 16 carried a full front-page article containing the text of a decree issued the day before in Berchtesgaden. It ran as follows:

As the effort of the Reich Church Committee to unite the groups within the German Evangelical Church has proved unsuccessful the Church shall now, in complete liberty and along the lines determined by the congregations themselves give itself a new Constitution and therewith a new organization. I authorize the Reich Minister for Church Affairs, with this object in view, to prepare the election of a General Synod and take all the necessary measures.

Needless to say, this surprise move did not have a sedative effect on the general public which at once inferred—as they usually did when decrees appeared suddenly—that something was afoot. Many did not know the beginning of the story but they soon found out. Speculation ran wild as to why Kerrl's nasty threats were not to be carried out. What were the real reasons and ulterior motives behind this unexpected surrender to scandalized public opinion? Was the Confessional group actually too strong for the Nazis to handle? Would Kerrl be dismissed in disgrace for his ineptitude at executing the task to which he had been assigned? In short, a fresh breeze blew through the Third Reich and the feeling of grateful relief that ran over the Confessional church members was comparable to the reaction which must have greeted Moses' announcement to the children of Israel that Pharaoh had promised to let them depart from Egypt. But it was Kerrl who was Pharaoh and Hitler who was Moses. The Fuehrer's prestige actually rose because it was he who had

countermanded Kerrl's orders by decreeing a new synodical election.

Whether or not Hitler was sincere at the time he signed the decree, the whole thing turned out to be merely another weapon of propaganda warfare, but a brilliant one. The London *Times* correspondent who had the best of contacts with men behind the scenes in Berlin reported on February 18, after Kerrl's return from his interview with Hitler:

Evidence now available shows that the history of the latest Church move was very different from the version it was sought to spread in the German Press by the oblique method of an attack on the foreign Press, accompanied by astonishing fabrications. It is confirmed that the decree which Herr Kerrl had announced for Monday's *Official Gazette* was going to be much more drastic than anything foreshadowed in responsible newspapers abroad, and that the "Generous" decision to hold elections was a sudden thought, due to urgent representations to the Fuehrer from powerful quarters interested in the smooth operation of the Four-Year Plan.

So none of Kerrl's dire threats were carried out save for an order which came on February 18 forbidding pastors to read from their pulpits lists of names of people resigning from the church. This arbitrary ruling, which abrogated a traditional practice of the German Church, was obviously intended to render resignation from the church still easier. It seems strange that resignation from the church should be facilitated just at a time when the Nazis would be interested in rallying favorable votes for the proposed election. Maybe it was imagined that a mass exodus from the church would be inspired by the Minister's order.

However this may be, nothing could have been better calculated to restore the confidence of many good Christians in the beneficent intentions of the Fuehrer and, at the same time, put a weapon in the hands of the anti-Christian Nazis who wanted to show skeptical foreigners how free the church was. The papers with one accord stressed the fact that the quarrelsome and stubborn church had been given

a final chance to redeem itself in the eyes of the nation. Everyone of them represented Hitler as a kindly, grandfatherly sort of person, whose patience had been sorely tried by the antics of a willful child but who was determined not to lose his temper and administer a well-deserved spanking. On the whole, it may be said that the smug self-righteousness of the Nazi regime has at no time been equaled or even approached by the German Church. This instance of cynical hypocrisy was the crassest of them all. One paper even inquired—rhetorically, of course, “In what other nation except Germany could the responsibility for free action be laid so frankly in the hands of the people?”

The cold truth was that the possibility of holding a free election of the New Germany was inconceivable. The very idea was repugnant to Nazi principles and the execution of the idea was out of question unless the church—properly represented in all its factions—were to run the election without interference from the state; which notion, in turn, was preposterous because all the election machinery was now in the hands of the state and, in the last analysis, the balloting would inevitably be colored by political considerations and fear of the Gestapo. Furthermore, it soon became evident that the order had been given on the spur of the moment without taking all of its implications into consideration. The Confessionals were quick to inquire who were to be allowed to vote. Over 95 per cent of all Germans were churchmembers and two-thirds of these were Protestants, but a very large number of them had no vital interest in the church and, besides, all possibility of reaching them via public press and radio had long since been denied even to the German Christians. How was an uninformed electorate to vote intelligently? The results of the Synodical election of July, 1933, which was stamped by Hitler, were recalled.

The offer of the General Election is important only in so far as it reveals still more clearly the true position of the Nazi government. Of course, it never came off. First, it was postponed until after Easter, then until fall, and finally it

was forgotten altogether. Kerrl said that it could not be held until the people were "of one mind" on the issues involved. In other words, he wanted another typical 97 per cent Nazi victory. After his speech of February 13 no one had any doubts as to what the state meant by "church peace" and the Lutheran bishops began to swing back toward the radical Confessional position from which they had veered two years before.

Assuming that the election was going to take place a terrific period of electioneering began which undoubtedly gave Hitler another unexpected insight into the depth and strength of religious feeling among the people whom he thought he knew so well. In my opinion the unleashed vigor and violence of religious feeling was chiefly responsible for the ultimate postponement of the election. The Nazis felt a force awakening which they might never be able to put to sleep again. A sixteen-page brochure entitled "Regarding the Church Election: What every man must know!" was issued by the Confessionals and distributed everywhere. It contained Hitler's decree, Dr. Zoellner's letter of resignation, Dr. Kerrl's speech, Dr. Dibelius's open answer, and a statement of the Provisional Church's position signed by Pastor Mueller of Dahlem. Sermons were preached and mass meetings were held. Signs of real spiritual revival began to appear that spring. The air was electric even though, as usual, nothing except that first notice had appeared in any of the daily papers. A splendid series of services of intercession was held in the Berlin's Apostle Paul Church where the Olympic services had been held the previous year.

The various governmental departments submitted various suggestions for the conduct of the proposed election but all of them were very faulty. Furthermore, the Confessional churchmen had made known a list of conditions which, it was said, were essential to perfect fairness and without the fulfillment of which they could not participate. Among these conditions were a requirement that all voters be checked at parish offices as to their active participation in church-life and a demand for full freedom of assembly and speech

as well as for the release of all pastors and papers from any restrictions imposed by police. These declarations took courage!

The German Christians, too, were busy and their campaigning consisted in having the Nazi Women's Organization make a door-to-door canvass to "talk over" the election on behalf of a National Socialist church. Reich Bishop Mueller emerged from semi-retirement to stump the countryside! His vicar, Dr. Engelke, undertook to make a lecture tour through Wuerttemberg speaking to the local groups of the Nazi's "Peoples' Church" in the course of which he scandalized the traditionally conservative farmer folk by stating that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God in the "massive Biblical" sense but that God had revealed himself in Jesus just as he had revealed himself in Adolf Hitler. Meanwhile, Dr. Kerrl, toward the end of March, issued a decree temporarily "freezing" the church administration until the meeting of the General Synod which, it began to be feared, would never take place. No pastors were released from concentration camps or house arrest; on the contrary, April, May, and June brought an increasing number of similar police measures. Pastors carrying bundles of pamphlets were arrested, and when I went one day to take a young minister out for supper he spent half an hour concealing what seemed to my American mind to be perfectly innocent papers behind pictures and under the rugs just in case of a casual police visit during his absence.

This was also a period of renewed charges of illegal financial transactions and homosexuality against the clergy of the Catholic Church, probably because of the pope's encyclical, "*Mit brennender Sorge*," in March, which indicated a bond of sympathy with the Confessional standpoint. Finally, on March 30, Hitler and Ludendorff buried the hatchet and the "religious" activities of Mathilde Ludendorff came to the surface again. Hitler's further contribution to the campaign came in his May Day speech when he warned both Catholics and Protestants to keep their opinions to themselves and confine their sermons to

spiritual edification. He admitted that nothing much could be done with obstinate oldsters but the youth, he crowed, were being liberated from the religious "mess." He was undoubtedly thinking of the Hitler Youth order of the previous December.

"We are taking their children away from them," he declared triumphantly, "and we are training them to become new German men and women. When a child is ten years old it has not yet acquired any feeling for high birth or ancestry, but is just like other children. It is at this age we are going to take them and form them into a community, and not let them go until they are 18 years of age. Then they will go into the party, the SA, the SS, and the other organizations or at once into the labor front, and the labor corps, and then for two years into the army. If that won't make a nation out of such people, nothing will."

Nothing daunted, the Prussian Synod of the Confessional Church meeting at Halle ten days later included a declaration of loyalty to the Barmen Confession in its proposed ordination oath, thus placing this document on a par with the Reformation statements of faith. Ministerial students who possessed the red card of the Confessional Movement were urged in a stirring appeal not to falter in their loyalty and, above all, not to give up their studies despite the hardships which they faced. In resolutions made a month later the Council of Brethren formally denied the right of the state to prohibit the taking of collections for the support of the church or the public reading of names of those who had resigned from the church. Thereupon many pastors who bravely disregarded the orders were arrested and some of them were brought to trial but eventually released when the orders were declared by German courts to be illegal.

In this cold recital of events as they occurred during the struggle it is impossible to portray the subdued excitement of church people whose religious feelings, now and then, seemed to be on the point of exploding and blowing up the

Nazi government. It was the year of the great World Church Conferences at Oxford and Edinburgh. German churchmen had, from the inception of the modern ecumenical movement under Archbishop Soederblom of Upsala, Sweden, taken a leading part in drawing closer the common Christian ties of all nations. No world conference had been held since Hitler had come to power and now, in June, the German delegation was forbidden to attend except for three representatives of minor bodies, namely, the Baptists, the Methodists, and the Old Catholics. This was in direct contravention of all the assurances given by Hitler, the Reibi, and Kerri that nothing would be done to interfere with the relations of German churches to the churches of the world. On June 4 the American Federal Council of Churches passed a resolution and Dr. Macfarland wrote an open letter to Hitler expressing in the strongest terms their disappointment at this revocation of a solemn promise, but of course nothing of that was published in Germany.

Cold-bloodedly the government went on issuing decrees and making arrests until virtually the whole leadership of the Confessional church was put behind bars as common criminals. But the casual visitor to Germany would never have guessed that anything was happening unless he had been able to read two articles published on June 25. The one article contained two decrees of Reich Minister Kerri under the headline "No Election Agitation in the Church!" The first decree transferred all control of church money to a system of newly created Finance Departments which were directly accountable to the Reich Minister. It was further stipulated that any action of local church authorities involving financial expenditures had to be approved by the Finance Department. This was designed to throttle the "rebels" completely by taking away their funds. Two days later Adolf Wagner, Gauleiter of Bavaria, announced the reduction of state subsidies to the Bavarian churches, declaring that the church was the only organized force in Germany which was disturbing the unity of the nation.



The second decree, much shorter and less technical, formally forbade, (1) the use of churches for electioneering purposes, and (2) the manufacture and distribution of election pamphlets until the date of the election should be fixed. Transgressions would be punished by imprisonment and fine.<sup>1</sup>

The second article in the paper that day announced the arrest of several Confessional pastors "on account of disobedience." They had persisted, it seems, in publishing from the pulpit the names of people who under Nazi pressure were canceling their membership in the church.

There were important visitors in Berlin that very week, namely, Sherwood Eddy's American Seminar composed of serious men and women who wanted to know what was happening in Germany. Dear old Professor Julius Richter, now deceased, saw to it that they found out and I have no doubt that the Gestapo really knew all about it. The Seminar had one "official" program for the benefit of the Nazis and another "unofficial" one which was not loudly advertised. On June 28 in Professor Richter's home on the outskirts of the city, Pastor Niemoeller, gaunt of frame and feverish of eye, addressed the group and it was the last time that I, who used to assist Professor Richter with the Seminar visit, saw the Dahlem pastor. Two days later he too was arrested

<sup>1</sup> The London *Spectator* published a letter, reprinted by the *Reader's Digest*, which I take the liberty of copying because it is very typical of what was happening at this time. For obvious reasons I use it rather than a hitherto unpublished letter.

Coblenz, June 21st, 1937.

To Assistant Preacher Herr Ernst Loh.

Horchheim bei Koblenz, Friedrichstrasse 15.

"A fine of 50 R.M., or, alternatively, imprisonment for 10 days, is hereby imposed upon you on account of infringement by you of Par. 1 of the Regulation 1.4.35, issued by the President of the Rhine Provinces for the combating of the abuse of theological debate and of offences against the fundamental principles of the National Socialist movement. . . .

In your sermon of May 30th, 1937, held in the Evangelical Church of Mayen, you declared the principle, 'Serve your people, and you serve God' to be untrue. You said that first of all one must serve God, and then one may also serve the people. Evidence: Your confession when questioned on June 11th, 1937."

(Signed) Dr. Nockemann.

despite the fact that many Germans were firmly convinced that Hitler would never risk so drastic a step.

His presence at Richter's had nothing to do with his arrest, however. In his last sermon, given on June 27, 1937, this fighting preacher had said:

We have no more thought of using our own powers to escape the arm of the authorities than had the Apostles of old. No more are we ready to keep silent at man's behest, when God commands us to speak. For it is, and must remain the case, that we must obey God rather than man. . . .

In this time of very special trial and struggle, we must bear in mind that every attempt to gain security by some other means, every turning of our eyes after some other source of strength, and support, works exactly in the opposite way to that which we intend . . . The suffering of our community, the shame which we have to bear when we take our stand beside the Crucified One, that is indeed a heavy burden and hardship; we feel the weight of it, and doubt creeps into our soul . . . But Jesus says: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you and persecute you. . . ."

There is indeed no hope except to hold firm to the Crucified One and learn to say in simple and therefore certain faith: "In the bottom of my heart Thy Name and Cross alone shine forth at all times and in all hours, and therefore I can be glad." It may be a long road until we are truly glad, like those who, like the Apostles, were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Now that Niemoeller has spent more than five years in prison it is difficult to recall those days when he appeared to be just a little too strong for the Nazis. There actually were public demonstrations and many people were arrested in Dahlem, but the suffocating hand of censorship and the ubiquitous presence of the Gestapo saw to it that nothing sensational occurred. The popular explosion which had been predicted if a finger were laid on the Confessional hero never materialized and, although the tide of religious revival continued to rise for a while, it gradually became apparent that, with its most spectacular leader gone, the

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Power, *Religion in the Reich*, pp. 142-143.

main strength of the Confessional tide was spent. It was destined to be lost in the floodtide of political sensations.

Niemoeller was released and then rearrested by the Secret Police and taken to Alexanderplatz. His tardy trial did not take place till the following February. Meanwhile, on the second Sunday in July the Provisional Council together with the Lutheran bishops caused a message which they sent to the government to be read to their congregations. In it they exhorted all Christians to remain faithful in the struggle and to pray for an honorable peace between church and state. A month later they met at Cassel and issued another Manifesto stating that a memorandum expressing their urgent desire to open personal negotiations had been sent to the government but the government had not acceded to their request. Now they wished to tell the people that this is a conflict which centers in God, Christ, and the church, namely, whether or not the German nation is to have a new God, a new Christ, and a new church, or not. They conclude with a rather desperate appeal not to grow embittered and weary in the struggle. The number of pastors and laymen in prison was very high all through the summer. Further demonstrations occurred, chiefly in Dahlem where services of intercession for the pastor were held every evening unless the police intervened.

The clashes with the forces of law and order were not without their moments of grim humor, but the best "comic relief" in this pageant of tragedy was afforded by the trial of General Superintendent Dibelius who was arrested on August 2 and tried for libeling Dr. Kerrl in his reply to the Minister's speech of the previous February. Kerrl was asked by the court whether he had a copy of his speech with him. When he replied that he had not, the defense quickly brought forward a verbatim transcript of his miserable talk which was read aloud and in full. The prosecutor himself told his client that, if he (Kerrl) had really described belief in Christ as the Son of God as ridiculous, he ought to resign his post. Then Kerrl was asked why, if he really felt so outraged by the alleged libel, he had waited six months

to bring charges against the defendant. After fumbling a reply, Kerrl at last admitted that he had been forced to prefer charges and defend himself because of the indignant letters he had received from all over the world, especially America. Thus he unwittingly revealed the reaction that his speech had caused. According to the people who were present, Kerrl's case went from bad to worse and Dibelius came off scot free—only to be rearrested.

The German press tried to find humor in the World Church Conference which was meeting at Oxford about this time but its sardonic sallies fell very flat, largely because it tried to anticipate what it thought the Conference would say about Nazism. The Nazis took full credit for giving the delegates to Oxford something to talk about. Naïvely, they pretended not to understand why the Protestant church could not get along just as well with a totalitarian state as with the liberal democracies whose Versailles Treaty the church had "silently accepted." Since the Protestant church had done nothing practical about the Versailles Treaty and nothing about disarmament, it had no right to denounce Germany now. Of course, the Conference did not denounce Germany. On the contrary, the Hitler regime was given the benefit of the doubt every time that there was any question regarding the status of Christianity in the Reich. With typical Teutonic asperity Hitler's own paper, the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, accepted the kindly words and then proceeded to lambast the other Oxford declarations with abuse. Triumphantly it printed the protests made by the three unimportant German free church delegates who could not have risked a return to Germany without having used the Conference as a sounding board in praise of Hitler and the freedom of worship which he had given them. The Conference very wisely understood even this bit of ventriloquism and I—who had gone to Oxford in fear and trembling at the things which outspoken American Christians might say—was relieved and gratified at the sane common sense which was displayed throughout the sessions. When one takes into consideration the fact that this great con-

vention had every reason to be keenly interested in the unhappy plight of one of its largest constituent members, it is clearly to be seen that the German press had absolutely no grounds for vituperation—except, of course, for Nazism's innate hostility to the whole Christian cause.

There were many other areas in which the increasingly bumptious Nazi government was throwing its new weight about. In his speech on January 30 of that same year Hitler had repudiated the basis of the Versailles Treaty, namely, its implication of Germany's sole responsibility in the matter of war guilt. The charge had rested very heavily on the German temper because very few Germans believed that their own country had fought anything but a war of defense in 1914, and they were hypersensitive to the fact that they had been obliged to make an acknowledgement of guilt.

At the same time the first stirrings of new wars yet unborn were already being felt in Europe's womb. Notes to Poland about hostile actions against German minorities which in turn had been organized by the Nazis were regular monthly occurrences. In fact, to Hitler's simulated horror the German Evangelical churches in Poland had been "denationalized." The Danzig pot was boiling, as was also the Sudeten pot in Czechoslovakia. Hitler's official and unofficial agents were doing a good job. Von Neurath, Minister for Foreign Affairs, was hurrying from capital to capital in the Balkans. A German warship on international patrol in Spanish waters took time out to shell Almeria in retaliation for the bombing of the pocket battleship *Deutschland*, and German planes were charged with the wiping out of Guernica. These items kept the public temper or at least the newspapers at fever pitch until the arrival of a victorious Mussolini for a state visit climaxed the ballyhoo of the Nuremberg Party Day to which British and American diplomats had gone for the first time. September was indeed a tremendous month. Truly Hitler was giving his people both bread and circuses. One had only to stand on the Olympic Parade Ground and

watch a million Nazis listening to the Duce speaking German to feel the mounting pressure of political tension.

While these events were played up, religious affairs were played down—down so low they could not be heard. Martin Niemoeller was held virtually incommunicado in prison awaiting a trial which was postponed from month to month. His colleagues gathered at his birthplace, Lippstadt, to draw up a statement of defiance which was read from all Confessional pulpits on the Sunday before the Nuremberg Parteitag began but it was only a whisper lost in the whirlwind. The loudly trumpeted general election had now been postponed for six months and was almost forgotten except by the people who were vitally interested in it. The only references to the church problem at the Parteitag were contained in short statements by Baldur von Schirach and Dr. Ley to the effect that they recognized only good fellow-Nazis without respect to religious confession.

Alfred Rosenberg was not so circumspect. He published a booklet entitled *Protestantische Rompilger* in which, for the first time, he unequivocally demanded the abolition of Christianity as a hindrance to the National Socialist revolution. All Evangelical churchmen, except the German Christians, replied to Rosenberg in an equally uncompromising Reformation Day Manifesto to which were appended ninety-five signatures, reminiscent of Luther's ninety-five theses which were nailed on the church door at Wittenberg. They begged Hitler to let them know where he stood but they received no answer. Reformation week brought a whole series of arrests especially in East Prussia where entire districts were deprived of their pastors and even of the pastors' wives. For the most part the congregations remained very loyal throughout the quiet test of strength and the pastors were eventually released, but only after the local fishermen refused to take out their boats and the women boycotted the local markets.

About a month later the New York *Times* released long extracts from an undated petition sent to the chancellor by

the army chaplains. Entitled "Memoir regarding the effects of the church struggle on the moral preparedness of the German people," the document described at length the increasing distrust of many loyal Germans at the government's evident hostility to the Christian faith. It estimated that 12 to 15 per cent of the population had already been disaffected by the strife and sounded a warning as to the effect upon popular morale in case of war. All in all it supported the Confessional position but did so from a rather questionable military standpoint which, of course, may have been looked upon as clever strategy, but that may be doubted.

Regardless of protests, the progressive destruction of Christian institutions by Nazi fanatics went on. In Leipzig the City Council was severely attacked by the Black Shirts because an old ordinance whereby orphans were to be brought up as Christians was upheld. In Oldenburg the Gauleiter ordered all religious symbols to be removed from the walls of the public schoolrooms. Little by little the repressive measures introduced in one province were extended to the others. Whether or not Dr. Kerrl was sincere in his desire to produce a pacification of the church issue, his contributions were of dubious value. On December 1 the question was given its semiannual airing in German papers in the form of a speech delivered by the Reich Minister in the Town Hall at Hagen. The headline was "No Misuse of Religion." Dr. Kerrl defined religion as "knowing what one does" and true liberty as residing in proper political action. Conscience, he said, lies in the blood; as long as a man is a good Nazi he can choose whatever religion he likes. The rest of the speech was devoted to an analysis of the public trials against the Catholic clergy.

This speech was to be the opening gun of a Reich-wide campaign to assure the people of their religious freedom. Norman Ebbutt of the London *Times* interpreted it as a signal that the state had finally given up its effort to subordinate or to Nazify the church, even in favor of the German Christians; but one week later, after the publication of a long article in Dr. Goebbels's *Der Angriff*, Ebbutt

decided that the government envisioned not a peace program but a "punitive campaign." He was right.

On December 10 the Reich Minister for Church Affairs legislated new orders for the administration of the church, thus effectively silencing all hope of an election. The "intact churches," such as the Lutheran Landeskirchen of Hannover, Bavaria, Wurttemberg, were to remain under the control of their bishops, but the other churches where the ecclesiastical government was split were to be administered directly from Kerrl's Church Chancellery. Furthermore, the church subsidies were gradually to be withdrawn and the collection of church taxes was to be turned over to the parish authorities, so that the state might be immune to accusations of favoring one religion over against another. However, the churches were to remain as "corporations under public law" in order that they might be controlled by the state. Any "provisional church governments" were once more proclaimed to be absolutely illegal.

The end of 1937 saw the end of the spectacular opposition of the Confessional church leaders. Resistance continued but the high crest of the wave of public interest in the church question had passed. Of the 120 pastors in prison before Christmas all but twelve or thirteen were released before the New Year. German pastors confessed to me that many of their people were becoming weary of fighting an unequal battle in which the opponent successfully concealed all news of the progress of the struggle or, indeed, would not even admit that a conflict existed. Individuals had that maddening sensation which naughty children are made to feel when their elders simply pin their flailing arms to their sides and send them to bed without supper. And there was no doubt that the government thought of the church as an obstreperous child. In the minds of people to whom politics rather than religion was the be-all and end-all of life, the church struggle was nothing more than an ill-timed prank of irresponsible children.

Tremendous events were in the offing and they began to occur just when Pastor Niemoeller was brought to trial



in February. On February 4, 1938, Hitler threw out General von Blomberg, Minister of War, General von Fritsch, Commander in Chief of the Army, and a number of other high officers. Foreign Minister von Neurath was replaced by Joachim von Ribbentrop. It was rightly suspected that the more conservative elements in the government were being jettisoned for lack of sympathy with Hitler's larger plans. This was, of course, the prelude to the annexation of Austria which followed on March 11.

Those were, naturally, very tense weeks in Berlin and it was impossible to give undivided attention to the Niemoeller trial. About a month after his arrest in the previous year he had been charged officially by the state prosecutor before the Special Court (Sondergericht) with "underhand attacks on the state," "misuse of the pulpit," and "public summons to disobedience and disobedience toward the ministerial decrees of February 18." Now, on March 2, 1938, after a secret trial, he was virtually acquitted of all the charges, but to make the record look good he was sentenced to seven months' imprisonment—already served!—for "abuse of the pulpit," and to a two thousand-mark fine for offenses against the special decree of February 18 prohibiting the public reading of names of persons who had resigned from the church. The charge of "underhand attacks on the state" found no substantiation in the eyes of the judges, who, under special war orders issued by Hitler in 1942, would never have dared to return such a verdict. Of course, even at that time the verdict had no effect on the fate of the prisoner. No sooner had he been acquitted than the Gestapo rearrested him "to protect him from an aroused public" and sent him to concentration camp where he still lingers. His retention actually hinged upon his refusal to sign a paper stating that he would not preach. A word to that effect would have opened his cell door long before his trial began but the ex-U-boat captain refused.

It can hardly be said that the backbone of church resistance was now broken but it must be admitted that both the pastors and the people lost a great deal of their spirit. The

consciousness of what Hitler had been able to do to the army high command, that bastion and untouchable tower of national strength, may have had some enervating influence upon the Confessional group. But, chiefly, the loss of spirit was caused by the realization that the regime had embarked upon a headlong course which sooner or later must result in an international crisis of major proportions. The Germans knew in their bones that war had already begun. In the face of a war emergency the voice of the church was smothered and its thrusts weakened. The fight began to look not only hopeless but dangerous to national safety. Before returning to the United States in that summer I asked a well-known Confessional pastor what explanation he could give for the collapse of popular interest in the religious issue which had been so vital only the year before. He said, "We . . . are . . . so . . . tired . . . and . . . worried." The great physical and mental fatigue of which he spoke was etched in deep lines on his own sad face. That spring, Bishop Marahrens of Hanover finally ordered all pastors in his diocese to swear allegiance to the Fuehrer, thus tightening the legal grip upon them.

The Confessional Synod met for the sixth time in June, 1938, and sent out a challenge in the form of a mimeographed page stating, among other things, that more than two thousand pastors had been affected by government intervention, that is, by arrest, concentration camp, prohibition to preach, or exile. As so often happened, this paper reached me in a plain envelope slipped into my letterbox at night. Across the bottom of the page was written in German script: "Can't you help your German brethren?"

There was precious little that anyone could do about anything in Germany at this point. Hitler's triumphal entry into Vienna had merely whetted his appetite for more bloodless victories and consequently the Czech crisis was induced by the same artificial means as the Austrian crisis. Even the Austrian bishops, with Cardinal Innitzer at their head, had issued a proclamation of congratulation which the Nazis were quick to exploit to its fullest extent, even

while Cardinal Faulhaber of Bavaria was fighting the local Nazis of Munich with his back to the wall. The little Evangelical Church of Austria subsequently followed the example of the Catholic Church. And in the plebiscite the Austrians plumped 99.72 per cent for the Anschluss! Just as Mussolini had come to Germany to celebrate the imperial status of Abyssinia, Hitler went to Rome to receive the plaudits of the Italians for his annexation which four years earlier would have been resisted by an Italian army pouring in over the Brenner Pass. Nobody was prepared to interfere with his plans now, and during the intervening summer months the plans for the annexation of the Sudetenland went forward apace despite the admonitory trip of the British Royal Pair to Paris and the mock mission of Lord Runciman to Prague. Hitler was not to be bluffed. In September came the annual Nuremberg Party Day with lots of drum-beating and swashbuckling. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain flew to Germany to avert war and the name "Munich" acquired a new and ugly connotation.

Those were very black days for ninety per cent of the German people. From the height of satisfaction at the bloodless annexation of Austria they were plunged into the depths of glum despair as they saw their Leader guiding them, as they thought, straight into war. The escape was so narrow that their reaction was one of emotional collapse rather than of joyful relief. Millions of Germans thanked God for Neville Chamberlain in those dark hours. The fact that the Confessional churches organized services of intercession for the forgiveness of personal and national sins infuriated the Nazi government because it correctly felt this gesture to be an absolute condemnation of Hitler's foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> The fact is irrefutable that the radical Confessionals believed war to be inevitable. They made no effort to conceal their true feelings in the matter and some of them, Jonah-like, were disappointed when war did not come. The government's answer was to stop the

<sup>3</sup> The order of service was reprinted in English in *The British Weekly*, Dec. 1, 1938.

salaries of all ministers who had a part in the proposal for the intercessory service. And, the moderate churchmen joined the German Christians in denouncing the action of the Provisional Church Council as unpatriotic!

From now on it was merely a matter of time before the inevitable war really would break out. Among intelligent observers the only persons who thought that there would not be a war were those who believed that England and France would continue to retreat before Hitler's demands. And I for one am firmly convinced that this latter belief is the same which Hitler entertained when he said on January 30, 1939, "*Ich glaube an einen langen Frieden*," meaning "I believe that there will be a long period of peace." He discounted the fact that the tempers of other peoples were rising even though their armies and air forces were pitifully weak in comparison to his.

Hardly had Europe regained its emotional equilibrium after the September crisis when another blow descended upon a punch-drunk people. The shock was so great and so unexpected that it evoked an even more violent reaction than the September crisis or the Austrian Anschluss. Furthermore, there was a moral issue involved which was fairly plain to the average German whose feelings had not, as in the case of the partition of Czechoslovakia, been anesthetized by propaganda. Of course, the press had had plenty to say against the Jews, too, but the next steps to be taken by the anti-Semitic campaign had not been heralded from the housetops like Nazi intentions regarding the Germans outside the Reich borders. Those next steps, however, had been carefully planned in advance and were ready to be carried into action one night in early November after Ernst vom Rath, young German diplomat at the Paris embassy, died from a shot fired by a hysterical young Jew. This was only one of a long series of violent deaths met by Hitler's representatives in foreign countries (although vom Rath was not a Nazi), but it was made the occasion of the most violent anti-Semitic demonstration that had

up till then taken place. Despite Dr. Goebbels' bland statement on the following day that the "soul of the nation had boiled over," the wrecking of the showwindows and the burning of the synagogues that night was well planned. The "soul of the nation" does not boil over at midnight or at one o'clock in the morning by routing young Storm Troopers and SS men out of their beds. Furthermore, it was easily seen that there was a singular unanimity of purpose about those raids, not only throughout Berlin but throughout the Reich, which coincidence does not account for.

There are for that matter many fascinating angles to most of these events but, for purposes of a straightforward account, we must confine ourselves to the angles which touch the Christian conscience most nearly. Jewish homes were entered without excuse and the furniture pitched out of the window. Old people were mishandled and some Jews were killed for trying to defend themselves. There were also Christian Jews affected by the demolition and spoliation of the business places which, by an earlier ordinance, carried the proprietors' names in big white letters across the plate glass windows of every non-Aryan business. All pastors, except the German Christians who had long since thrown out their non-Aryan brethren, knew what it meant to spend sleepless nights over the problems of Jewish or part-Jewish parishioners. Anxiety had been aroused by the first "token" boycott in 1933 and the struggle over the Aryan Law which was proposed as a requirement for the German Ministry. It cropped up again at every new and more serious anti-Semitic measure until now the Jews were to be totally excluded from the German community. Nevertheless the Confessional church was adamant in its insistence upon protecting these brethren and I can testify that in Berlin, where I knew what was going on, the pastors acquitted themselves heroically. They had set up a committee, under Pastor Grueber, to help Christian Jews emigrate and to aid them as long as they had to stay in Germany. It was a huge job involving a relief agency, an educational program, and endless struggle with governmental agencies both inside and outside the

Reich for passports, visas, permits, and so on. As a reward for his labors Pastor Grueber and several other members of his staff were sent to concentration camp in 1940, although his committee had been given grudging governmental recognition for expediting the emigration.

The year 1938 closed with one last attempt to intercede for the church in its hard struggle for existence. The plea was made by nonagenarian Field Marshal von Mackensen, the "grand old man" of the German Army, who requested of Hitler freedom for Pastor Niemoeller, stating that he would renounce a public funeral and every other honor if this wish were to be fulfilled. Nothing was heard of this petition in Germany except via the usual grapevine telegraph. It was, of course, refused, just as the previous interventions of other top military men, including General von Fritsch, had been disregarded.

The first half of 1939 was characterized by three more acts of Axis aggression and the obvious preparation for a fourth. In March, Hitler walked the whole way into Prague, thus for the first time setting foot upon non-German soil. Sir Nevile Henderson, British ambassador in Berlin, marked this as the point at which the British who still entertained qualms of conscience about keeping German minorities from going "Heim ins Reich" dismissed all doubt as to Hitler's real purpose. That same month the Memel district was detached from Lithuania and rejoined to East Prussia. On Good Friday the Duce launched his attack on Albania. The country which was being "softened up" was Poland.

The religious phase of the internal situation was completely forgotten as all Germans of whatever persuasion huddled more closely together in fearful apprehension of the future. Most of them suffered from an emotional confusion of admiration and shame and terror at the piratical policy which was being followed so successfully by their ruthlessly clever Leader. There was good reason for this spiritual confusion. Although the hypocritical bleating of Goebbels at the expulsion of German pastors from Polish cities was

ridiculously transparent, the whole American colony in Berlin was impressed by Captain Wiedemann, the newly appointed Consul General to San Francisco, who at a special luncheon of the American Chamber of Commerce told us that he had only three things in mind: first, to obey his Fuehrer's orders to represent the New Germany worthily in America; secondly, to represent America fairly in his reports to the Foreign Office and to abide by our laws; thirdly, to devote himself to drawing the two nations closer together. It was evidently a sincere speech and I, for one, was still more impressed when Frau Wiedemann asked whether it might not be possible to send her two young daughters to Sunday School at our American Church for the brief interval before their departure in order to prepare them for Sunday School in America.

Shortly after this I attended a Confirmation Service at Niemoeller's little St. Anna Parish in Dahlem. It was on a Friday night and the ancient village church was lighted only by candles which lent an air of the Roman catacombs to the ceremony. The atmosphere was electric. The acting pastor, a very old man, told the young confirmand that the faith which he was confessing might lead him to the concentration camp, into exile, or to other painful sufferings. In the prayer there were stirring petitions for the pastors who were under arrest or forbidden to preach.

It was hard to reconcile this sort of thing with the urbanity and apparent sincerity of the new consul general. What sort of nation was this in which we were living? The Bible was still outselling *Mein Kampf* by 200,000 copies per year and the youngsters of the American-German Pupil's Exchange—an official project—were still permitted to attend special services at our American Church though I minced no words in addressing them; yet eleven Nazi churchmen issued a new declaration about that time stating that all supranational or international ties constituted a political degeneration of Christianity which was meant by God to serve only the "order" to which it was assigned. The same declaration stated that the National Socialist movement was

the lineal descendant of Martin Luther's Reformation movement; yet simultaneously there came a report of a meeting of the Protestant Christian Union, composed of French and German pastors who first assembled at Mainz in 1921, which was held at Speyer where, despite the unfavorable international conditions, "not one false note was struck."

In short, it was possible to prove any thesis you liked so far as the religious situation in Germany was concerned. All you had to do was, first, select suitable facts from a great assortment of statements and statistics, secondly, discard whatever data did not fit your particular design, and thirdly, set up your mosaic of great artistic beauty and verisimilitude. I have spent many a perplexing hour, alone and with friends, trying to select the proper pieces and reconstruct the design for religion which was in Hitler's mind.-One of the main difficulties was that too many little Hitlers thought they knew what the big Hitler really wanted. Above all, I sympathized with the common people who were torn in several different directions at once. The struggle between the German Christians and the Confessionals was still going on. That much was obvious. Kerrl's decrees always favored the former group who were thereby encouraged to continue a fight in which they were badly outnumbered. Their program called primarily for the elimination of Jewish elements and the re-education of the children along National Socialist lines.

The inability of the Nazi Christians to overcome the stubborn resistance of the Confessionals led to an outburst of impatience on the part of Heinrich Himmler who allegedly proposed that this irreconcilable wing should renounce its claim to a share of church taxes, surrender its rights as a corporation under public law, and turn over certain cathedrals to the Elite Guard for its Germanic ceremonies. The reason for this audacious proposition lay in the fact that the extreme radicals among the Nazis were slowly but surely moving into key positions because of their reckless advocacy of power politics. Owing to his efficient adminis-



tration of the police system at home and in the newly acquired areas—to say nothing of the recent pogrom—Himmler emerged from comparative obscurity and was destined to become an increasingly powerful figure throughout the war years. From this time his hand will be seen more clearly in the aggressive anti-Christian measures.

The growth of the SS organization with its Gestapo subsidiary required the constant addition of new barracks and offices. No more suitable properties could be found than the monasteries, convents, episcopal residences, schools, and so forth of the Christian churches which, the SS thought, would soon be dying out anyway. The guinea-pig area for experiments along this line was Austria where a great deal was accomplished in the name of reorganization of national life, but soon the confiscations spread into the Altreich. Because of a terrible fear no audible opponent to these measures was found until the Bishop of Muenster tore loose in the early summer of 1941.

June seems, for some reason, to be one of the favorite months for undertaking comprehensive action against the internal "enemies" of the Nazi state. In 1933 the most important political parties, including the once all-powerful Social Democrats, were suppressed. In 1934 came the "Blood Purge" within the Nazi party. In 1935, Dr. Kerrl was appointed to carry through the "co-ordination" of the churches. In 1936 the German police were given full authority to keep the "pigsty" from coming to the attention of Olympic visitors. In 1937 the German delegates to Oxford were refused their passports and a wave of new orders regarding "electioneering" and the control of finances was loosed, resulting in the arrest of many pastors including Niemoeller. The year 1938 was rather quiet, as we have seen, but in June, 1939, the most serious encroachments of the state on its last "enemy" began. The struggle ceased to confine itself to factions within the church and became an open fight between the pagan state and the Christian faith. The confusion which has been described began to

clear away at last, never to be conjured up again by smooth talk and sly measures.

Radio broadcasting of religious services was banned and has never been resumed despite many petitions from ill and aged people. Sunday morning programs were filled with military concerts or "meditations" on some Nazi anniversary. When request was made for the recovery of this privilege, the answer was that the radio is a government agency and the government is not an instrument of the church. One elderly lady whom I did not know sent me a copy of a letter which she mailed to Dr. Goebbels, containing a pathetic plea for the continuation of Sunday church programs. "Would it be possible to arrange for a matins service with a Christian basis?" she asked. "I know that in all of Germany there are very many invalids, blind persons, and cripples who cannot go to church and stand in need of hearing a little something Christian and churchly on the radio. It doesn't matter from which confession, just so it is a Christian greeting. Formerly these matins services were held regularly on Sunday, then they came less frequently, and now unfortunately they have ceased altogether; the reasons for this I do not know. I do know, however, that it would be a great joy to very many people and surely a great success for the radio if the Christian services on Sunday morning were to be resumed. A sick, old, blind woman told me that she had always anticipated every Sunday with joy and now she missed very much being able to sing the well-known old hymns." The petitioner went on to say that she liked to hear marches and soldiers' songs too and that she was a party member, but she still thought that the Christian services should not be given up entirely.

Even more crippling was the order of the Reich Literary Chamber that only bookstores which are devoted exclusively to religious literature may display religious books and pamphlets; conversely, the religious bookstores could not carry secular literature. This virtually restricted the sale of all Christian reading matter to the church publishing houses and a very few retail outlets under church direction. As the

Chamber is the dictator in the field of publication, its word was law. Two years later, in June, religious publications were given the *coup de grâce* by suppressing them almost completely on the grounds of paper shortage.

From this long play-by-play account of the church struggle preceding the outbreak of war at least two major conclusions may be drawn. In the first place, no doubt is left in the mind of the most objective observer that the Nazi government has no real sympathy for the Christian cause which it at first pretended to espouse. The most charitable thing that can be said for Hitler's several efforts to "co-ordinate" the church is that he, his good intentions notwithstanding, simply does not understand the genius of the Christian faith nor the hold that it still has in the hearts of the same people who welcomed him as a national hero and political savior. As the church never meant much to him, he cannot see why it should mean so much to others. As National Socialism means everything to him, he thinks it should mean everything to all Germans. There is no reason to think that Hitler is a very complex person; he would appear to be, on the contrary, an oversimplified individual—the apotheosis of the little man—who began by believing that all Germans ought to be as he is and concluded by believing that all men should be as the Germans are.

Regardless of Hitler's own feeling for Christianity, the men who were gaining power under him were plainly determined to eliminate this "alien religion" completely if it persisted in refusing to recognize the supremacy of National Socialism. They became sympathetic to an ersatz religion either because they perceived the value of exploiting man's innate religious instincts for political purposes or because they saw the importance of a mystical faith in the drab lives of the average mortal.

I shall never forget a midnight conversation with "Putzi" Hanfstaengl a couple months before he fled to Switzerland. We were walking down the Wilhelmstrasse after a dinner at the Hotel Kaiserhof. His Bavarian temperament was more

than usually excited, probably because of the difficulties he was having within the party. Jabbing his cane into the pavement outside the hotel where several taxis were aligned, he exclaimed with needless violence at the gasoline fumes which polluted God's clean air. Coming to another full stop a little later, he waved his arms at the lovely old eighteenth-century building—designed by Schinkel—which now houses the Propaganda Ministry and asked why the New Germany could not erect architectural monuments like that. "What are these people (meaning his fellow-Nazis) doing in our nation?" he cried out. "Now they are trying to take away our religion. Rosenberg and his crowd! Herman, do you know what they want? They want to deprive the common people of the only beautiful thing they have! Do you know what I did? I had my boy confirmed! Yes, by God (here he stopped and stabbed the sidewalk again), I had him confirmed in the magnificent Frauenkirche at Munich. And, do you know what else I did? I went to that confirmation service myself! I wanted to show our pious people that I was not in favor of this nonsense."

There are very few people in the government today who would be willing to express themselves as did the effervescent Press Chief, who, it will be noted had no personal faith of his own. Goering might cherish similar ideas but even he has refused to permit chaplains in the Luftwaffe. All the rest—Goebbels, Ley, Himmler, Rosenberg, von Schirach, von Ribbentrop, and others—were and are bitterly hostile to the church, although von Ribbentrop once tried to regain his renounced membership when he thought that he would thereby be a more acceptable ambassador to the Court of St. James.<sup>4</sup> It must not be forgotten that it is these latter men who had usurped the real power—from the army generals like von Fritsch or civil officials like Finance Minister von Schwerin-Krosigk who for a long time

<sup>4</sup> This story which is very revealing has been recounted in Stein's *I was in Hell with Niemoeller*, and is absolutely authentic. Niemoeller refused to reinstate von Ribbentrop whose home is in the Dahlem parish.

supported Niemoeller—and that these are the men who want to get rid of Christianity once and for all time.

This brings us to the second conclusion to which a review of the pre-war years forces us, namely, that the Nazi state itself had either started from or arrived at the viewpoint that a new religion must be sponsored by the New Germany. Whether or not Hitler had seriously entertained the development of a purely Nazi church may be debated, but the main point is that his followers who nourished that hope superseded all of those other followers who hoped to reconcile Christianity with National Socialism and, little by little, have imposed their will upon the nation in the manner which I have described in the first section of the book which dealt with Nazi "Shintoism."

But if Christians had good reason to be appalled at what had happened to the church, the thinking Nazis, if any, had even better reason to be appalled at the havoc which the religious struggle had wrought on the morale of the people. They had won a Pyrrhic victory which left the warmongers ill-prepared to enter upon the desperate enterprises which were bound to come. Instead of being able to count upon the spiritual support of a united nation, Hitler—whether he knew it or not—was forced to count upon the iron discipline of Himmler's Gestapo. That had become apparent with the arrest of Martin Niemoeller in 1937. The silencing of the Dahlem pastor was as much a part of the pending military campaign as the ousting of the old generals seven months later. The church henceforth was to be like a conquered country ruled by the police.

Unfortunately, it was also true that the church had been forced into a position from which it could no longer minister effectively to the spiritual needs of the people, especially the soldiers, in a time of national tragedy. It went to war not only with the government but against it. That, as I have pointed out, is the chief reason why the regime has used the war as an excuse and a screen to complete the strangulation of the Christian faith. The radical Nazis set out to prove to the nation that the war could be won

without the prayers of pastors and people whose petitions for victory in 1914 were rewarded only by disgraceful defeat and an insulting peace.

I wonder if these last three chapters have underscored sufficiently the heroic fight which the church has waged against crushing odds. Of necessity my account has been severely restricted to a chronological table of events which the reader himself must clothe with the spectacular episodes and anecdotes which have leaked into the American press at fairly regular intervals without, however, revealing the evolution which I have now tried to describe. It is impossible to heap too much credit upon the German Church, regardless of its mistakes and indecisions. For fighting Hitlerism with all its strength it deserves, in my opinion, a seat among the United Nations!

## CHAPTER X

### *German Catholicism Rejects the Axis*

THERE are a number of good reasons why this description of Christianity's struggle with Nazism has dealt almost exclusively with the trials and tribulations of the German Evangelical Church. One of these reasons is that the author, whose contacts with German Christianity were predominantly Lutheran, feels a certain hesitation about entrusting himself to territory where he is not so sure of his historical footing as far as the spirit and the genius—not the factual data—of that history are concerned. On the other hand, he cannot deny that he has already exposed himself in the entire first section of this book to the description and evaluation of a religious phenomenon which is not even Christian, and it would, moreover, be a most serious omission if this book did not contain at least one chapter devoted to the Catholic Church of Germany which, especially in these latter years, has taken an increasingly prominent part in the revolt against what has been called "ecclesiastical Hitlerism" (*kirchliche Hitlererei*).

In certain respects the Catholics have suffered even more under the Nazis than the Evangelicals, but the Protestant reaction to Hitlerism achieved public expression earlier and was more spectacular than the reaction of the Roman Church which believed that it had found in its Concordat of 1933 a *modus vivendi* with the new regime. Although many of the Catholic clergy mistrusted the intentions of the government from the very beginning, they were held in check by a stronger sense of hierarchical obedience than the Protestants—living up to their name—possessed. Besides, Germany is usually thought of as Lutheran. It will be recalled that the first religious opposition to Hitler flamed up in Prussia where Protestantism is predominant and where

the Evangelical hierarchical tradition has been particularly weak. At the time when Hitler came to power Germany was only one-third Catholic, and Prussia, which has no episcopal system, was a stronghold of the Reformation faith.

It is interesting to observe briefly in this connection the part that Prussia has played in German Catholicism which is centered mainly in Bavaria and the Rhineland. The Roman Catholic Church had fought a rather unequal battle in Northern Germany ever since the sixteenth century. While Frederick the Great, in the eighteenth century, was making Prussia a power to be reckoned with, he took time to give Catholicism equal rights with the Evangelical Church and, although his personal opinion of Christianity matched his friend Voltaire's, he supported the erection of a Catholic church near the Protestant cathedral in Berlin, namely, St. Hedwig's, which is still their chief place of worship. The growth of the nationalistic spirit in nineteenth-century Europe, however, presented the Roman Church with new difficulties, which—so far as Germany was concerned—came to a head when two events of far-reaching importance occurred simultaneously in 1871, namely, the promulgation of the doctrine of papal infallibility and the proclamation of the German Empire in the palace of *le roi soleil* at Versailles. Bismarck himself took up the cudgels in what was baptized by Rudolph Virchow, the renowned physician and statesman, as the *Kulturkampf*. It was essentially a struggle between church and state for the possession of ultimate authority over certain ecclesiastical matters which unquestionably carried political implications. For all practical purposes no clear decision was arrived at in this struggle, owing largely to the fact that the Evangelical church refused to lend its full political sanction to the Iron Chancellor's anti-Catholic policy, yet for many years thereafter the Catholics felt themselves—with a great measure of justification—to be proscribed.



This picture changed abruptly after the first World War. Although the Catholics lost the protection of the royal houses of Hapsburg and Wittelsbach in the Catholic South, they gained many prominent positions in the Republic. The *Zentrum* party, which was avowedly Catholic and which Bismarck had not been able to smash, began to exercise a tremendous influence in the Reichstag because it could, for example, throw its weight at will either to the left—to the Communists, or to the right—to the Conservatives. Under the new Republican constitution the Catholics were once more free to establish as many monastic and conventual institutions as they pleased. From 1913 to 1926 the number of cloisters grew from 373 to 559 and the number of monks from 6,430 to 10,458, excluding novitiates. The law suppressing Jesuit orders was also repealed.

The Protestants described this strong Catholic movement as a new Counter-Reformation and there was a great deal of uneasiness lest Catholicism should sweep the whole of northern Germany into the Roman camp. Capable Catholic writers and artists monopolized the country's attention. "Catholic Action" welded all lay organizations, particularly the Catholic youth groups, into one aggressive movement. Numbers of prominent Jews were converted during these years. Furthermore, the Vatican, which had promulgated a new Codex of Canon Law in 1917, exercised its political power effectively to conclude very favorable concordats with the separate German provinces. In 1919 the papal delegate at Munich, Archbishop Pacelli, was named the first papal nuncio to Germany and five years later he transferred his residence to Berlin, after the conclusion of a new treaty with Bavaria.

But the sudden burgeoning of Catholic strength began to decline as a more conservative trend of thought which disliked the brash worldly exuberance of this new Catholicism made its influence felt within the church. The high-water mark of the new Counter-Reformation, so far as public demonstration goes, probably occurred on Corpus Christi day in 1927 when the Reich Chancellor and dozens

of other dignitaries marched in the procession which went down Unter den Linden.

It was a sign of the disturbed times that Germany was thinking of everything, including religion, in terms of political influence. This continued, as we have seen, to be the keynote of much religious thinking even after Hitler came to power, and goes a long way to explain the subsequent distrust of the Catholics by the Nazis who railed at "political Catholicism." The Brown Shirts were aided as we have said, by Protestant pastors who hoped that Hitler would give them back a real state-church; and there were many Protestants who eagerly applauded the final smashing of the Zentrum party which, it must be admitted, had done a great deal to deserve the ill will it had aroused. Despite the fact that Hitler was supposed to be a Catholic, he lost no time in dissolving all political parties, including the Zentrum, but he immediately and readily assigned to Franz von Papen the task of negotiating with the Vatican for a new concordat. This document, which gave the Roman Church almost everything it wanted, was duly ratified and both the uncertain Nazis and the alarmed Catholics imagined that they had emerged successfully from their first test of strength. Inasmuch as the Protestant churches were united about the same time—the summer of 1933—into a German Evangelical Church, many people took it for granted that the entire religious question had been happily solved and they gave Hitler all the credit.

Without going into all the terms of the Concordat, which stipulates among other things that the full authority of the Catholic Church in the religious sphere would not be touched as long as it refrained from political activity, it is necessary only to say that the government began to break the provisions almost at once, especially those regarding the rights to educate the youth and to administer church property. Two years later the pope publicly reprimanded Germany for disregarding its solemn obligations and Goering retaliated by depriving the church of more privileges. Nor did the agreement prevent anti-Christian agencies in the

Nazi party from launching scurrilous attacks similar to those which were being made on the relatively defenseless Protestants. From the beginning certain Catholics and Protestants began to draw together in a common front to ward off these vicious blows. On the other hand some Catholics to whom dictation was not offensive became good National Socialists and sought to reconcile their religion with their political faith by trying to serve both temporal sovereigns. As a consequence, it may be said that there soon were pro-Nazi, anti-Nazi, and middle-of-the-road priests just as there were "German Christian," "Confessional," and "Moderate" pastors. In the Catholic Church, however, these divergent tendencies were less apparent owing to the more closely knit hierarchical organization which entertained the vain hope that the Nazi regime might eventually decide to live up to the terms of its treaty. The private doubts of any particular priest or group of priests regarding the religious question were therefore confined largely to the immediate parish; but it may be said that in spite of an outward semblance of unity the Catholic Church in Germany from 1933 to 1939 was plagued with the same inner divisions and indecision which characterized the Protestants. Not necessarily confessional differences, but political ones. In order to understand this it must be remembered that the advent and rise of Adolf Hitler caused splits which not only cracked institutions wide open, but split families asunder, separating father from son, sister from brother.

It is generally assumed that the Catholic communion in Germany possessed a centralized authority which the Protestants lacked owing to the division of the latter into numerous territorial administrations and sects. Because of this, it is argued, the Catholic Church ought to have been in a better position to oppose National Socialism. That is not altogether true. Even if the Catholic Church had been as indivisibly united as some Protestants suppose, experience has shown that those German organizations with a single responsible head were invariably the first to succumb to totalitarian tactics and stood in greater danger than less

highly organized bodies. It would naturally be easier to lop off one head than many.

The organization of the Catholic Church in Germany, except for its ultimate allegiance to Rome, is not unlike that of the Protestant church in so far as the old territorial divisions still are maintained, namely, in *Landeskirchen*. Authority is vested in a conference of all the bishops meeting annually at Fulda which is the traditional capital of Catholicism in the Reich. Each year it is the custom of these leaders to issue a general pastoral letter which both reports on the past and exhorts toward the future. Special letters may be issued on special occasions. It was the nonappearance of the annual letter during the first war year which indicated that the Catholic Church was in the process of reviewing its attitude toward the regime in the light of World War II. This assembly, which had roundly condemned Hitler and all his works and ways in 1932, officially withdrew its protest two months after he came to power in 1933. Not until 1941—at the time of the Russian campaign—did it again throw aside all discretion and tell the world just what it thought of the spiritual state of affairs in Germany. The bishops deserve particular credit for taking this exceedingly provocative step in the midst of war but it is unfortunate that action did not come sooner.

The situation was complicated for the Catholics by the presence of a nuncio who today resides just off the Wilhelmstrasse and is, as usual, the dean of the diplomatic corps. When Pacelli was nuncio he established the custom of entering actively into the diocesan activities of the German church, but the present representative now stays strictly at home and preserves a passive attitude which may be in the best diplomatic tradition but is resented by many ardent churchmembers.

One of the earliest centers of Catholic protest grew up in Munich which was also the birthplace of the Nazi movement. Cardinal Faulhaber, Bavarian archbishop, expressed in no uncertain terms his disappointment at the government's

casual disregard of the Concordat: "Why have a Concordat, if it is not kept? We were hanged without the Concordat, and with the Concordat we are first drawn and quartered and then hanged." The sorest point of all was the obvious maneuvering of the Nazis to secularize the confessional schools of Bavaria. The *Schwarze Korps*, grind-organ of the Black Shirts, retorted by taking the cardinal and all other Catholic bishops severely to task for their attitude, complaining that the prelates had written more pastoral letters since Hitler came to power than in the previous fourteen years and that not one of them rebuked the anti-Nazi agitation by Catholics in foreign countries—an agitation which was based entirely on misleading epistles from prelates inside the Reich!

By 1937 the storm of anti-Christian feeling had broken in full fury all over Germany and the Evangelical Church was at the height of its struggle which had finally caused Hitler to silence Reich Minister Kerrl and announce the nation-wide election which never materialized. It will be recalled that the pope had indicated his sympathy with the Confessional cause in the famous encyclical "*Mit brennender Sorge*." Everything about the Nazi ideology which smacked of pseudoreligious pretensions was being attacked by the Catholics, especially the "blood and soil" doctrines. The apoplectic Nazis retaliated by threatening to continue the prosecution of priests and nuns for alleged immorality and money-smuggling. The Foreign Office formally protested to the Vatican against the "agitation" of Cardinal Mundelein in Chicago and the German state attorney charged the Bishop of Speyer with breaking the Concordat and committing high treason by circulating the "atrocities" stories upon which American anti-Nazism was fed. New statistics regarding the extension of the monastic orders were presented: in 1918 there were only 388, in 1935 there were 662. In 1918 there were 7,592 monks, in 1935 there were 15,337. In pained surprise the *Schwarze Korps* asked why the pope was complaining. It was pointed out that before 1933 a new ecclesiastical institution was founded every 2.76 days, whereas since 1933

they had been growing at the rate of one every 1.26 days! It was pointed out further that the Catholic Church has been permitted to transplant thousands of settlers into Protestant areas each year!

The Catholic churchmen, like the Protestant, were not to be consoled by statistical tabulations, nor were they to be blackmailed by specious appeals to special privilege. Their worst fears were confirmed by Gauleiter Wagner's announcement in June that all Bavarian schools would be secularized, ostensibly in accord with the wishes of 95 per cent—more statistics!—of the Bavarian parents. Thus the Nazification of the whole school system in the province was completed, although, when Hitler came to power, only about 100 of 1,066 schools were nonconfessional. Moreover, similar conversions of schools were undertaken in other sections of Germany, notably in the Saar which had returned to the Reich only two years before.

A disgusting public exhibition was made of the "immorality trials," not because of a desire to mete out justice, but purely and simply to embarrass the Roman Church which, in many instances, had disposed of the guilty persons years before according to its own disciplinary regulations. As in the case of Protestant ministers who were being arrested by the hundreds on various charges, the State's clear purpose was to discredit Christianity by "unmasking" the clergy as common criminals. Self-righteous Nazism was determined to break, if it could not bend, the church which so stubbornly resisted its conquest of the German soul. Twenty-five thousand German Catholics were arbitrarily refused permission to attend a Eucharistic Congress in Vienna.

The money-smuggling charges, although they may have been technically true, likewise provided superficial excuses for defaming overzealous priests who sought in this unwise way to bring their funds outside a nation which had clamped down artificial laws on the free flow of currency in an effort to build up the reserves which would eventually pay for the present war. Thousands of people smuggled money in those days and hundreds of them were caught, but only the

Catholics and the Jews were publicly prosecuted on the assumption, apparently, that Aryan Nazis would not be guilty of such misdemeanor. At the same time, however, Dr. Schacht tracked down—secretly of course—millions of marks being smuggled out of the country by high party officials. The monetary restrictions crippled international church work, especially foreign missions, very badly. The Evangelical mission societies scrupulously obeyed every fiscal regulation and thus were never charged with smuggling, but their moneys reached their final destinations only after very heavy subtractions had been made. Obviously, the Catholics must have been, as a general rule, equally circumspect, but the Nazis evidently felt that they had to take special pains to play upon that old German distrust of Rome.

We have already referred to the fact that the Catholic case was tragically weakened by the position into which Cardinal Innitzer of Austria allowed himself to be forced at the time of the Anschluss early in 1938. His proclamation of welcome to the German Army after his conversation with Hitler must have been a bitter blow to Cardinal Faulhaber who was being furiously attacked by the Nazis in Munich, just over the border. Of course, the proclamation was exploited to the limit by the jubilant Nazis press and a papal rebuke could not undo the damage. The situation was not unlike that which was caused by the episcopal revocation of the Fulda Conference in 1933, because Innitzer, in view of his declaration of unyielding support given to Schuschnigg less than a month before the annexation, had turned a full somersault.

The Austrians, who at first thought that they would retain a large degree of autonomy, soon discovered that they were to become just another province of a Greater Germany. In this way there disappeared the only country—with the possible exception of Portugal—which had consciously built its government on the model of a perfect Catholic Christian State envisioned in the papal encyclical "*Quadragesimo Anno*." Austrian Catholics had, to a certain extent, been alienated by this too-Catholic regime, but they were destined

to be far more disillusioned by their new master to whom the old Catholic Church of his boyhood days meant nothing. More swiftly than in the Altreich the schools were secularized and church properties expropriated for the benefit of the carpetbaggers who descended from the North. Sadly enough, there were Austrians too who were eager and ready to profit by the revolution. Even the episcopal palace at Salzburg was turned into an SS—not Sunday School!—barracks.

The Catholic Church, according to the Nazi press, does not deserve to exist. The Berlin *Nachtausgabe*, which is not even a party paper, declared about this time: "In the whole revolutionary history of humanity, characterized by the nineteenth century and really fulfilled in the twentieth, the Catholic Church has always stood to one side. That is how it saved itself. It never did anything either for the good or for the abolition of evil during this time. But the man who believes in himself and fulfills the laws dictated by his own blood will not die!" Elsewhere we have referred to the Nazi descriptions of the "appalling conditions" which existed in Austria with respect to marriage and divorce laws.

Michael Power, who himself is a Catholic and knows Austria intimately, has devoted an entire section of his book *Religion in the Reich* to the problem facing the Catholic Church in what is now the *Ostmark*. In it he presents the sordid story of Cardinal Innitzer's betrayal more effectively than any Protestant could do, and he describes in vivid words the oppressive measures carried into effect during 1938 and 1939. As it turned out, these measures were to provide good working models for the steps to be taken subsequently in the Sudetenland and then in the western part of Poland. The two general lines of attack were, as usual, directed at education and financial control.

In the first year of the war which soon followed these annexations the heavy hand of Heinrich Himmler, chief of the SS, was felt more strongly than ever by the Catholics within the old borders. It was supposed that the church



would be effectually gagged by its sense of duty to the state in time of war and that the few outcries which might be voiced would be discounted as unpatriotic by those who would say, "Well, this is war." In fact very few protests were heard in the early months. Not only were properties sequestered everywhere but a policy of mercy-killing which will be discussed later was inaugurated. Niemoeller was behind barbed wire and there seemed to be no one to take his place. The German propaganda machine was enjoying making rosy reports to the outside world regarding the solidarity of the German people behind Hitler. The pastoral letter of the Catholic army bishop, Dr. Rarkowski, on the first anniversary of the war was quoted with relish for the benefit of American Catholics but not one word from his pen appeared in the home press. "The German people, who for one year now have been waging war against their enemies," he said, "have a clean conscience and know who those people are who before God and history are burdened with the responsibility for the gigantic struggle which is now going on. They also know who wickedly started this war and know that they themselves are waging a just war. Our enemies begrudged us a place in the sun and desired to destroy us for ever. They wanted to degrade us to a people of helots so that, as far as we are concerned, there can be no doubt as to who is right in this war and whom God will help. The German people have to fulfill a big task before God. Therefore, many German hearts and hands will rise in prayer to God that He may take Germany under His protection. At the front and at home, the people understood when the Fuehrer and Supreme Commander more than once in the past war year implored the Lord's blessing on our good and just cause. This community of prayers at the front and in the homeland shows that this war is not only an affair of the soldiers, but an affair of the whole German people."

It was not hard to get more statistics from the German information services to indicate that religion was flourishing in the Reich. On October 24, 1940, a German news service

aimed solely at the United States proudly pointed out that the forty-eight dioceses in Germany contained thirty-three thousand active priests and that "all religious practices are being carried out with full liberty and without interruption or constraint." In one year, 162,251 couples were married by the Catholic Church and 389,328 children of Catholic parents were baptized. During the same twelve-month period 312,074,947 communions were taken, or 14.34 communions for each Catholic! The eight Catholic faculties in the state universities were functioning. "If nothing else is certain these days, the figures just quoted should prove one thing: that both the churches and the exercise of religious practices are very much alive in Germany."

If the truth were to be told, religion was just a little too much alive in the Reich. The war was stirring up the spiritual depths of many people who had been indifferent to the fate of the Christian church. The chaplains at the front, to whom additional reference will be made, were doing a good job but there were not enough of them. The ministers at home awoke to new responsibilities. The RAF air raids began, not very hard at first but sufficiently intense to give the inhabitants of blacked-out cities something to think about. Consequently, the anti-Christian forces in Germany saw that something would have to be done to counteract the revival of interest in religion by providing a substitute for it. The book *Gott und Volk*, which has been described, was circulated freely through the military camps to support the Nazi doctrines to which an aroused church would inevitably object.

It was this book which caused the Fulda Bishops' Conference to break the silence which it had kept since the outbreak of war nearly two years before, despite the fact that a Franciscan monastery on the Frauenberg in Fulda itself had been turned into a training center for the Elite Guards. A search of the buildings had revealed 170 rings of sausage and 6,000 preserved eggs which were merely the winter supplies for 120 monks who had no ration cards at all. Accused of hoarding, the brethren were ordered to leave the province

of Hessen within twenty-four hours. Dozens of similar stories could be told of such wartime confiscations, yet the Nazis continued to "get away" with their high-handed practices.

It is a sign of the fundamental soundness of the German Catholic Church that it left no doubt in anybody's mind that it was interested primarily in the spiritual welfare of the nation, not in its own rich holdings. Passing swiftly over these confiscations on the one hand and disregarding the Russian campaign on the other hand, the bishops fulminated against the efforts of certain "elements" whose aim was to separate the German people from their Saviour. "There are many forces at work destroying the tie between Christ and the German people. The existence of Christianity and the church in Germany is at stake."

The letter was divided into three parts: first an admonition to self-sacrificial work and fighting in the service of the Volk, putting all trust in God who guides the nations. The second part contained an announcement that the bishops were faithfully doing their duty in lodging protests against the restrictions and repressions placed upon the church in the latter times. Among these repressive measures therein cited are the limitations imposed on religious education, the suppression of the Christian press, the deliberate obstruction of pastoral activity by refusing free access to hospitals, and interference with services and religious holidays. They made it clear that these measures were not required by the war effort and they begged their people to keep the faith, rebuild the family altar, attend services more frequently, and see to the religious training of all evacuated children. The third section carried the real burden of the pastoral message: "Dear people, with flaming indignation we German Catholics refuse to make this choice (that is, between Christ and Germany)! We love our German Volk and we shall serve them, if necessary, to the sacrifice of our lives. At the same time, however, we live and die for Jesus Christ and we desire to remain bound to him now and forevermore . . . He who denies me, him will I deny before my

Father! He who confesses me, him will I confess before my Father in heaven!"

The property confiscations spread into Westphalia, the diocese of Graf von Galen who was the first Catholic bishop elected under the new Concordat in 1933. Within two weeks eight diocesan institutions of monastic or conventual character were simply sequestered and their inmates ordered to leave the province on the same day. The bishop had not been quiet during these years, but he had not achieved the same position of popular leadership which Cardinal Faulhaber and other outspoken leaders had long since occupied. Within one month of these new expropriations, however, he became the most talked-of man in Germany and the Nazis shriveled in the blaze of his justified anger. As it happened, the Gauleiter and the Elite Guard of Westphalia had picked an unpropitious time to begin widescale seizures of the Catholic institutions in the district. Muenster, the capital and seat of the diocese, was visited by the RAF in two or three of the heaviest raids that had occurred in Germany up to that time. The effect, because of inadequate anti-aircraft, was devastating. Goaded to despair by the attacks from above and the treachery from within, the bishop delivered three of the most daring sermons that any congregation in the country had heard since Hitler came to power.

On July 20 in the *Ueberwasserkirche* in Muenster he started out by stating the special collections were to be taken in all parishes which had not suffered from the air attacks. "Thank God that no new attacks of the war enemy have struck our city for the last several days. I regret to say, however, that the attacks of our enemies within, the beginnings of which I spoke of last Sunday in St. Lambertus, have been continued regardless of our protests and regardless of the heartsuffering which they bring upon those who are directly affected and their relatives."

Then he listed the confiscations and pointed out that some of them involved church homes from which boys had gone to the front as soldiers, many of whom had been dec-

orated. "While these German men fight in true comradeship with their German brothers, offering their lives for their homeland in obedience to duty, their parental cloister home in the Vaterland has been recklessly destroyed without any legal reason. When, as we hope, they return victorious, they will find their cloister family driven from house and hearth, and their home occupied by strangers, by enemies. How will it end? This is not a matter of supplying a temporary refuge for Muenster's homeless people . . . In the *Immakulatskloster* in Wilkinghege, so far as I have heard, the provincial film agency has installed itself! I have been told that a maternity home for unmarried mothers is being set up in the Benedictine Abbey . . . And not one newspaper as yet has reported these undangerous triumphs which the Gestapo have wrested from unarmed monks and defenseless nuns, and these conquests which the provincial government at home has made from the property of their German compatriots!"

The bishop presented a report of the steps he had taken to bring the situation to the attention of the highest authorities in Berlin, and how he had been informed that his protests had been referred to Heinrich Himmler! Every word of the sermon was loaded with dynamite. He renounced all feeling of fraternity with the instigators of the persecution, and pointed out that German Catholics must for the moment content themselves with being the anvil which is struck by the hammer, remembering that the anvil, not the hammer, shapes the ironware. The whole new educational system was criticized, including the Hitler Schools. Finally, he closed with the text: "Be sober and vigilant, for your enemy, the devil, wanders about like a ravening lion seeking whom he may devour!"

Within a week after the delivery of the third sermon, which was concerned chiefly with mercy-killing, copies of these discourses reached Berlin and were eagerly transcribed by all who could get hold of them. Conflicting rumors spread regarding the fate of the courageous bishop. One report stated that he was held under house arrest, and another stated that the regime had made its peace with him by

promising to call a halt to anti-Catholic activities in his diocese if he would cease preaching. As in so many other instances, the full story has not yet been told, but it is highly unlikely that this fighting prelate permitted himself to be bought off so cheaply.

As a matter of fact the protests of the Catholic churchmen have increased both in frequency and intensity during the war, *pari passu* with the intensification of the anti-Christian crusade. March 22, 1942—the day of the first Hitler Youth “confirmation”—marked a change of policy on the part of the episcopal conference from protective self-defense to an “all-out” offensive. A pastoral letter was issued which never reached the United States, at least so far as the general press was concerned, until June 1, when Herbert L. Matthews, New York *Times* correspondent in Rome, brought it back with him on the exchange ship *Drottningholm*. Our group of repatriates from Germany which had been tightly bottled up in Bad Nauheim had not heard of this letter and Mr. Matthews, into whose hands a copy had been hastily thrust just before he left Italy, did not know exactly what it was. He had turned it over to H. Gruber Woolf, pastor of the American Church in Rome, who brought it to me one day aboard ship.

This letter which the *Times* published in translation one week after our arrival in New York has been reproduced in the Appendix in full because it sums up clearly and concisely the whole case of the Roman Catholic Church against the Nazi State, from the first violations of the Concordat's provisions regarding religious education to the latest abuses of the Gestapo in making arrests and confiscating property without due process of law. This latter point, of course, is particularly interesting in view of Hitler's speech in April arrogating supreme judicial authority to himself—a move which cast a terrible pall of gloom over the German nation whose faith in the judiciary had been their last bulwark of hope against the willfulness of party zealots. Americans coming direct from Berlin to embark on the *Drottningholm* reported that German morale had been severely shaken by

this direct blow at impartial justice based on a recognized code. Hereafter justice would be a matter of the arbitrary discretion of Nazi judges.

There seems, however, to be some question as to the extent of the attention which the bishops' letter received in Germany. An American Catholic news service (CIP) reported in August that "thus far it has not been possible to discover even one church where the pastoral was read on the appointed Sunday." In some places it was read on Easter or at Pentecost but it would appear that the effectiveness of this very strong appeal to German Catholics was spoiled by its manner of presentation. Naturally, it is dangerous to publish such letters from the pulpit at all, but there might conceivably be less danger in doing it everywhere at once rather than in postponing the issue. Of course, unusual difficulties may have arisen in forwarding copies of the message to various parts of the country. The government does not seem to have reacted directly to this challenging protest, thus indicating that the policy of suffocation is still being pursued.

The same news service reported in September, however, that the Catholic chaplaincy had suffered further restrictions in its work among the soldiers and sailors. Despite Monseigneur Rarkowski's very cautious policy, orders have been issued that no more religious booklets may be published for the military, that Catholic clergy who are ordinary soldiers, that is, not chaplains, may not carry mass kits or ask for permission to do so, and that pastoral care—provided presumably by these nonchaplains—is to be allowed only in exceptional circumstances in the armed forces. It is stated that nine out of ten of the priests in the German Army are not chaplains.

About one year before we left Berlin there were reports of the difficulties under which the Catholic chaplains worked, paralleling similar difficulties of the Protestant chaplains whose troubles will be described in a later chapter. At the beginning of the war there was supposed to be one chaplain for every 10,000 men, but no provision was made for the rapid extension of the Wehrmacht, which was being ex-  
include almost every able-bodied man in Germany,

and, moreover, large numbers of the Catholic chaplains were being sent home on leave and were not being recalled.

Co-operation between the Catholic and Protestant chaplains, which this situation called for, has been thoroughly Christian in every respect and thus it has been possible—theoretically—to give all soldiers, regardless of confession, the spiritual care which they desire to have; but there are many sections of the Wehrmacht, especially Luftwaffe, which have no chaplains at all. In such instances the ordained ministers who were regular members of the armed forces were sometimes permitted by their superior officers to act in lieu of chaplain without regard to creedal distinctions. Apparently, this practice has now been stopped, although it had been rumored that the present regime actually favored this method of erasing confessional distinctions in the hope that the disappearance of the confessions would lead eventually to the disappearance of Christianity.

It is a fact that some Nazis envisioned a single German Christian Church under the new system, including both the Catholic, which would be cut away from Rome, and the Evangelical, which would renounce all its international Protestant connections. Evidently the scheme did not work.

It will be remembered that an amalgamation of Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Prussia had been forced early in the last century. Nevertheless, that stage in Hitler's thinking—if, indeed, it ever existed—appears to have been superseded by a desire which will be satisfied only when he has disembarrassed himself completely of the whole Christian religion because it insists on being a thorn in his side. The Nazis have awaked to the fact that the two churches, without any thought of union, have joined in a common cause against all attempts to destroy that great universal Church of which they both felt themselves to be members. The common bond forged by suffering represents an almost revolutionary change from the traditional rivalry, sometimes most acrimonious, which formerly existed between "papists" and "heretics" as a result of long religious wars. Indeed, in certain districts there is even a degree of active collaboration



between the clergy of the two communions. Standing shoulder to shoulder, they are forestalling and combating the hostile acts of the party now in power. This is in line with a declaration which I once heard Niemoeller make to the effect that he felt spiritually closer to a certain Catholic bishop than he did to a certain Nazified prelate of the Protestant Church.

Both churches are a standing challenge to the narrow nationalism of the Nazi State but the Catholic Church, even more than the Protestant, has been both a "red rag" and a "sampler" to Hitler who resents the temporal power invested in the person of a non-German pope and admires the kind of discipline which the church exercises over its worldwide membership. It has been thought that Hitler might be appeased by the election of a German pope or by the erection of an independent papacy in the Third Reich which, centered in Vienna or Munich, might eventually become the spiritual seat of Europe's New Order. Although no conjectures regarding Nazi plans should be branded as impossible of realization simply because they seem far-fetched, there is no good basis for believing that many people in Germany, least of all the German Catholics, lend credence to such fanciful proposals. The reaction of Cardinal van Roey in Belgium, Cardinal Hlond of Poland, the prelates of Lyons and Toulouse in France, and the bishops of Holland provide an accurate index of the extent of Catholic "collaborationism" with the New Order in the occupied countries.

In brief, the Catholic Church today presents an unshaken and an unshakable front to the Hitlerian ideology. There is, on the other hand, an ardent hope in the hearts of many Catholics and Protestants that their common suffering may lead to a greater measure of sympathy and understanding in the common task of rebuilding a postwar world. Signs of a rapprochement are evident, but undoubtedly there will have to be a very strong popular demand for closer co-operation in Christian work before the ecclesiastical authorities will voluntarily abandon their traditional reserve.

PART III

The Impact of War



## CHAPTER XI

### *The Church Does Not Go to War*

AS A MUNDANE organization the Christian church of any given country is exposed to the vicious vagaries of war in the same manner as all other national or international institutions and it quite properly expects to bear its share of the national trials and tribulations. Indeed, if it fulfills its function as the conscience of the people, the church is likely to bear more than its due share. Regardless of its sins of omission and commission in the events leading up to any outbreak of hostilities, the church temporal—which is, in the final analysis, the fallible representative of its constituent members—is accustomed to identify itself with the national *casus belli* in its most ideal aspects. Whether right or wrong, this is what happens everywhere, especially on the unhappy continent of Europe where armies, marching and counter-marching for hundreds of years, have left behind them crisscrossing trails of blood, hunger, impoverishment, death, and hate.

The German Church even under Hitler is no exception to the rule, in so far as its formal support of the national war effort is concerned, but its support has been qualified and unenthusiastic. In its capacity as a national institution the church cannot divorce itself from national tragedy. Although a few Germans—like some of their Japanese allies—seem to derive a certain sadistic, spiritual satisfaction from glorifying martial enterprise and “heroic” death, the majority of them agree with the generally accepted view of our times that war is a national and international disaster. Even Hitler, while exalting the concept of struggle, pays lip service to the ideal of peace and bemoans the expenditure of precious time which might otherwise have been used for so-called constructive purposes. But his specious laments

evoke very little sympathy on the part of people who have always foreseen that the "peaceful" policy he was following would lead to war.

Only in the most literal sense of the word may the church be said to be behind Hitler in this war. Only the most radical Confessional churchmen, however, are hoping and praying, not that Germany will be badly beaten, but that the present regime will be defeated and overthrown. The vast majority of the clergy, torn between love of homeland and loyalty to their persecuted faith, hope and pray for an honorable peace. These latter rarely admit, even to themselves, their hope that the end of war will be the end of Hitler too. One of the principal reasons for this apparently wishy-washy attitude is that the older ministers particularly have a deadly fear of the chaos which will probably ensue upon Hitler's disappearance.

Support of the war effort has been largely physical and ethical, rather than spiritual. To indicate its oneness with the people the church has assumed uncomplainingly the wartime burden imposed upon it by the state and has even volunteered its services over and beyond the requirements imposed by a hostile government, which is studiously careful to prevent the church from receiving its share of popular recognition. The Christian ministry of the German Church to a nation at war has thus far been exemplary, especially when the difficulties it faces are taken into sympathetic consideration. The least of these difficulties have been the physical hardships.

Preparation for war and the war itself had strained German resources to the breaking point. Ever since 1933 the whole economy of the Reich has been sacrificed to the Moloch of Hitler's war machine. It was not to be expected that the church would be spared. For years it had been difficult to obtain even such unessential things as altar candles or brass ornaments of any kind. Fats were scarce and all available metal was diverted to the munitions plants. A much used slogan of the day, it will be remembered, was "cannon instead of butter." The dealer who supplied the American Church in Berlin foresaw the necessity of going out of business

altogether owing to the impossibility of replacing his stock. Before the war the candles merely burned badly and gave off a very unpleasant odor. After the first year of war they were cut to half-size, would hardly burn at all, and became almost impossible to obtain.

The coal shortage was more important. Only by the greatest persistence, conniving, cajolery, and bribery could sufficient fuel be obtained to heat even the smaller rooms of most church buildings. The heating of large auditoriums was abandoned altogether. This rendered the holding of services in the unusually cold war winters extremely difficult, but it was not to be expected that churches should be heated at a time when many homes and business houses were totally without warmth for weeks at a stretch and had hot water only on Friday and Saturday of each week, if they were lucky. In Berlin's well-to-do West-end large numbers of apartments were as cold as ice for weeks on end, and some of the inside rooms actually were covered with ice two or three inches thick. Flats in the same buildings with physicians or barbers were at a premium because such buildings very often had hot water all week.

Coal was rationed on the basis of a fractional percentage of purchases made in prewar years but, owing to failure of transportation facilities, only a small portion of this reduced amount reached the cities. Because of my diplomatic status and the fact that my apartment was in the church building, enough coal was obtained for the American Church, but only after a testy official of the local administration had told our janitor that soon no churches would get any of the precious German fuel and Christians could stay at home to do their praying. Of course, little gifts of coffee or tobacco went a long way to smooth the road into the heart of officials and dealers. Nevertheless, I was considered very fortunate and some German pastors whom I knew would have been glad to hold certain services in our building if it had not been for the danger attached to the acceptance of American hospitality. Over a year before Hitler's declaration of war on the U. S., German pastors—along with

all other civil servants—had received confidential instructions to have no intercourse with Americans except in cases of absolute necessity.

The decision to stay away from church services was made easier not only by the frigidity of the churches but by the inconvenient schedule of all public conveyances on Sunday mornings. Of course, there were no private cars for that purpose. The few buses which remained on week-day routes were withdrawn on Sunday or ran only in the afternoon. Street car lines likewise slowed down or stopped altogether, whereas the subway and elevated trains in the city were operated at intervals of fifteen or twenty instead of five minutes. This probably was not a deliberate antichurch measure but it is certain that less consideration was given to church attendance than to the Sunday afternoon visiting among friends and Sunday evening amusements. As we left Germany last spring the traffic problem had become so bad that the seats were being ripped out of public vehicles to make more room for passengers and, in some cases, school children were forbidden to use trolleys at all and housewives were ordered not to ride during the rush hours. This was not owing so much to increased traffic as to the worn-out equipment and shortage of electric power.

Still more important was the paper shortage. Upon one pretext or another the circulation of religious papers and periodicals had been radically reduced long before the outbreak of war, at which time a general process of restriction began. Printers were given exact instructions to be followed carefully in filling all orders for printed matter. In the average stationer's shop, which once was crammed from floor to ceiling with a vast variety of dusty supplies, empty spaces began to appear on the shelves and quickly the quality and quantity of the stock dropped like the mercury in a thermometer which is put in an icebox. The types of celebrations that could be announced by printed card were drastically restricted. The number of wedding or funeral invitations that could be made was strictly limited. Offices were advised how to cut down their consumption of paper,

although the complicated engine of government consumed more paper than ever before. It took the second and third year of war to force a halt in the paper work of German officialdom. By that time the basis of rationing everything had changed from "important to the war effort" to "decisive for the war effort," thus effectively abolishing the last pretence of *business as usual*.

Already in the spring of 1941 the American Church ceased issuing its annual report to avoid having to ask for paper which was generally denied to religious organizations. Then in June came a series of antichurch measures including the suppression of 99 per cent of all religious publications of any kind—programs, tracts, pastoral letters, papers and magazines and the like. The reason given was shortage of paper but it was obvious that discrimination had been shown, because in no other general field did the new cut exceed an additional 20 per cent at most. Even the movies were still selling their insipid picture-programs at that time. The Nazi determination to deny the church all access to the reading public has already been described.

To a certain extent similar physical handicaps had been placed upon German churches in the war of 1914-1918 but never with malicious and discriminatory intent. Finally, they had lost their bells in a desperate effort to supply the cannon factories with metal. This stage, too, has already been reached in the present war in spite of Goering's frantic exploitation of the lowest grade ore in Germany.

One Saturday afternoon before Easter, 1942, the Americans temporarily interned at Bad Nauheim were taking an escorted stroll along a highway outside of town. In a speeding truck which passed us I saw some church bells, and when we passed the Catholic church on our way back to the hotel the telltale scaffolding was seen under the spires. The next morning at service the priest in a voice charged with emotion told the congregation that four out of five of the big bells which had been replaced after the last war had been removed, but that phonographic records of the peal had been made and these would later be sold to



members who wished to have them. Of course, they would have to turn in an old record in order to get the new one.

Not only belfries but many pulpits have been emptied of their occupants by drafting pastors for military service. Occasionally the newspapers contain among the death notices an announcement regarding a pastor or priest killed at the front. As the older ministers die and no young men are found to replace them, pastorates fall vacant and congregations suffer. To a certain extent this condition has been ameliorated by an apparently secret but obvious desire to get rid of chaplains in the army by dismissing them to their homes, but if the Christian ministry is not replenished by new candidates for the clergy the situation will soon become critical. And, no candidates are available because students who have not been ordained are required for military service. Some theological faculties have closed altogether and in the remaining ones not more than four hundred students are registered, approximately one-seventh of the necessary number.

There is another very important aspect of church work which has been directly affected by the outbreak of war. No funds can be sent to the support of widely scattered foreign missions in which the German Church was deeply engaged. Ever since the restrictions governing foreign exchange went into effect with the advent of Hitler this problem has been a knotty one. The Protestant church was meticulously careful to observe the galling restrictions which not only made it difficult to forward money to foreign missions fields but set up such an unfavorable rate of exchange that a large percentage of the money raised for missionary purposes was dissipated before the ultimate destination was reached. Christian missionaries sent abroad by the German Church were exploited, like merchants, in the Nazi barter system to procure economic advantages for the Reich.

With the coming of total war all remittances automatically ceased and the missionaries were left in the lurch. Several attempts were made by the mission boards at home to arrange indirectly for their support, for example, by making transfers

in Japan which was both neutral and a member of the Axis. German societies would have been glad to support the American missions in Japan in order that their missions elsewhere should be subsidized from the United States. The Nazis refused to consider the scheme. Then there came an opportunity to supply funds to British missionaries who had been brought to Germany from torpedoed ships. The German Foreign Mission Board hoped that, as some of these missionaries—for example, the Canadians taken from the *S. S. Zam Zam*—were working for American societies, their respective boards would be glad to co-operate by transferring funds to orphaned missions. This project, however, suffered the same fate as the other and the British missionaries continued to depend upon living allowances made from British funds administered by our American embassy. In addition to being shipwrecked, these people were interned and then only the women were released inside Germany without means of support. The amount of money which could be allotted to them by the embassy shriveled under the rate of exchange and, besides, life in Berlin was unusually expensive not only by reason of war but because they were enemy aliens who did not know the German language. Fortunately, some of these women were permitted to leave for home on the second sailing of the exchange ship *Drottningholm*.

All of these aforementioned difficulties are the direct and not unnatural effects of war which can hardly be expected to be avoided if the church is to bear its share of the burden. To them must be added still another factor. The church and its members on the home front are not exempt from enemy action in the form of bombings. The German press would like the world to believe that nothing but churches, charitable institutions, and workers' homes have been hit. That is a standing joke even among Germans. But it is true that churches and church property have been damaged or destroyed along with military objectives. I cannot truthfully say that great damage had been done to Berlin

by the time we left but there are good and sufficient strategic reasons for that. Falling steel splinters damaged the tile roof of our church, however, and we found out how difficult it was to obtain a roofer who could repair it. Throughout Germany the minor damage and normal deterioration of war has put a terrible strain on the remaining labor. Plumbers, carpenters, and so forth, who retired many years ago were called back to work, but they have no desire to push themselves in an effort to keep up with the urgent cries for help. Bribery, not with money but with goods, is the only sure bait.

In the areas where bombing has been intensive or where the comparatively recent all-out raids have occurred, great damage has been done. The news of the *Blitz* against Rostock and Luebeck reached us even in internment, and a terrific public and private hue was raised over the destruction of the ancient churches, as "landmarks" and "cultural monuments" of the nation. Interestingly enough, the protests seem to have come not so much from the ecclesiastical authorities as from the Propaganda Ministry. The Christians of Germany realize what the raids of their own Luftwaffe have cost the British church and they are silent.

On the other hand there have been complaints, in a country where complaint is tantamount to treason, about the tactics used in the Nazis' private war on the church. More damage, physically and morally, has been done by the land raids of the Gestapo than by the air raids of the RAF. The complaints quite rightly base their protests against antichurch measures on the danger of disrupting national solidarity, which is an argument calculated to appeal to an otherwise indifferent government. These expressions of dismay addressed to the Chancellery or other state officials uphold the pretty fiction in which many Germans like to believe, namely, that the state is not fully aware of what the party is doing.

The complainants rightly contend that many of the measures are not warranted by the exigencies of war. They say that the anti-Christian elements in power are using the war

as a shield and cover under which to pursue their purpose of extermination. The situation would be ludicrous were it not so tragic. On the other hand, aggressively anti-Christian elements arrogate all patriotism to themselves and charge the church with splitting the home front whenever an occasional voice is raised in public or private protest. The Nazis cannot see that even today it is the old faith, rather than the new, which keeps the nation from flying into a million fragments under the tremendous pressure of totalitarian war.

A book in itself would not suffice to record the deliberately anti-Christian attitudes and actions for which the regime, despite its preoccupation with war, has found time. Some of the general discriminations were of minor importance; as, for example, the order to celebrate secondary church feast days on the following Sunday instead of on the weekdays where they properly belonged, or the pointless order forbidding services to be held before ten o'clock on the morning after an air raid. The ten o'clock rule was applied to the public school too, ostensibly to protect the children's health; but the Sunday rule merely meant that people who habitually went to early mass—workers, for instance—would no longer attend service. Attempts to hold special festival services on weekdays resulted in a formal threat to lay a heavy fine upon the parish, as at least one Catholic church discovered when it tried to conduct services as usual. A new ruling now permits not more than twenty-five inscribed workers to attend early mass.

Much more serious was the official policy regarding the care of evacuated children. From cities subject to enemy air raids whole schools of children, classes intact, were sent into the country under the auspices of a special national committee. By the robust standards of National Socialism adequate precautions were taken to protect their health and their instruction continued as usual. All parents, however, were not satisfied with the arrangements and many complaints were made by frantic mothers. One of the chief grounds of complaint, circulated privately if not presented publicly,

was the deliberate attempt to wean Christian children away from their religion. They were told not to say their prayers or ask to go to the local church. When Christmas came, parents were horrified to learn that the children's festivities, while elaborate, were shorn of every Christian symbol. In one camp a few homesick kiddies who gathered in one room the day after Christmas to sing "Silent Night" and some other carols were severely reprimanded for attempting to augment the German Christmas by the introduction of alien customs.

The following spring, 1941, pastors themselves received direct from the Propaganda Ministry mimeographed suggestions as to the appropriate themes for Good Friday and Easter, namely, the beauty of self-sacrifice and the glory of renascence. These themes of course were to be applied to the life of the German nation rather than to the life of Jesus. The second war winter had been no easier than the unusually severe first war winter and the churches were being recruited to rebuild the national morale.

Pastors and priests however were in no mood to be exploited as auxiliaries of an anti-Christian propaganda machine. Their labor of comfort, consolation, and encouragement was becoming heavier and the burden was in no way lightened by their increasing lack of confidence in the government. They had come to realize that the publicly expressed wrath of the government at the mistreatment of German clergy was aroused only when such persecution could be laid at the door of other nations, such as the Czech, the Polish, or the Russian.

It was about this time that pastors were refused admittance to hospitals and clinics unless they came at the written invitation of a patient and with the approval of the medical authorities. In such cases they were forbidden to visit or speak to any other invalid.

Then at the beginning of June—the fatal month—came a whole series of hostile measures just before the commencement of the Russian campaign. The religious press was

summarily ordered to cease all publication. YMCA properties were taken over by the Gestapo and the main headquarters in Berlin were shortly thereafter used to house Jews who had been picked up on charges of evading the rules about shopping only between four and five p. m., or being at home after nine o'clock in the evening. In occupied countries from Czechoslovakia to Holland the YMCA buildings had long since become advantageous military headquarters. Hotels, or hospices, run by Christian organizations were told to remove all religious pictures from the rooms and Bibles from the bedside tables.

At the same time a number of smaller Christian sects defined as "international and inimical to the state" was suppressed without warning or announcement. Thus, the Christian Scientists who had five large congregations in Berlin arrived one Wednesday at their meeting places at service time only to find the doors closed. The practice of "healing by prayer" was outlawed and made a civil offense punishable by fine and imprisonment. Eight months later, attention was given by the *Frankfurter Zeitung* to the former first reader of Bad Homburg, a woman aged 61 years, who was sentenced to two months in prison for trying to maintain her congregation and giving aid and comfort to its members. Usually, when articles of that sort appear in the press, they are not included for their news value but as an indication that this sort of thing is so frequent that the time has arrived to give a salutary warning and example.

The one thousand people who were picked up and carried off to the notorious Alexanderplatz prison in Berlin on June 12, 1941—Corpus Christi—must have presented a sad and curious spectacle. Devotees of mind reading, palm reading, star reading, and spiritualism were brought up by the Gestapo dragnet along with the earnest disciples of a dozen different and exotic offshoots of the Christian faith. For periods ranging from a few hours to several days they were confined to the vermin-infested cells of the monstrous red brick building, discolored by soot and shame, which stands in old Berlin near a busy square that—in its better

days—was named in honor of the official visit of a Russian Czar. Only when required to visit this place on embassy business connected with the internment of British and French civilians have I passed beyond its steel door furnished with a peephole and heard it snap behind me, but those visits were quite sufficient to give me a healthy dislike of the place.

Before releasing the badly frightened adherents of the various religious or pseudo-religious societies each one was cross-examined at length and then required to sign a paper promising that he or she would renounce all connection with the forbidden cult and never again resume practicing it.

It was rumored that this action had some connection with the sensational one-way flight of Rudolph Hess, Hitler's chief aide, from the Messerschmidt airport at Augsburg to the moors of Scotland. Just what that connection was never received adequate clarification. A sect called the "Community of Christians" (Christengemeinde) was dissolved along with the others at this time. It was said that Hess's parents had been among its adherents and that Hess had an estate which was run by members of the sect in accordance with their communal principles based on an attempted reversion to First Century Christianity. On the other hand it was whispered about that Hess was under the undue influence of fortunetellers or even that he had been "wished away" by hostile occult forces.

The full story of Hess's sudden flight may never be known unless Hitler or Churchill decide to divulge the real reasons for it. Regardless of its apparent repercussions in the religious sphere, it may be assumed that the flight was more intimately connected with the coming attack on Russia, probably to offer truce to England. At any rate, nobody believed the official explanation which implied that he was crazy. Furthermore, everybody knew that he was the one sincere Nazi of them all and that Hitlerism was his religion. He had no apparent church connection; in fact, he seems to have gone out of his way a couple of years earlier to have his three-year-old boy put through a pagan ceremony,

with Hitler as godfather, shortly after the Goerings' baby daughter, Edda, was baptized—in Hitler's presence—into the Christian faith by Reich Bishop Mueller.

That this new wave of antireligious action was not confined to the sects was apparent not only from the suppression of Christian publications but also from the new epidemic of confiscations of Protestant and Catholic property. Kindergartens, hospitals, and church homes, including convents and monasteries, were peremptorily taken over—not by the army for war emergency use, but by the Gestapo and other party agencies purely for their own benefit.

The Catholics seem to have been singled out for special attention in this respect, probably because of the Pastoral Letter which had been issued by the Fulda Conference of Bishops about one week after the commencement of the Russian campaign. Instead of leaping to the support of the regime for its "crusade against Bolshevism," the annual letter vigorously attacked the anti-Christian influences openly at work inside Germany. Not only did the Fulda Conference find adequate provocation for their protest in the recent antireligious measures, but particular alarm had been aroused by the governmental sanction given, as was noted before, to the distribution throughout army and party of the book entitled *Gott und Volk*, which called upon all Germans to decide between Christ and country.

The contents of the letter spread like wildfire throughout the country and evoked a letter from the government by way of Reich Minister Kerrl's office for church affairs. Surprise was expressed that the Bishops' Letter ignored the crusade against atheistic Bolshevism and that the Catholic Church had not presented its grievances in a regular manner to properly constituted authorities instead of exciting the people by direct approach. In reply, the incensed bishops simply drew up a long list of occasions on which they had addressed the properly constituted authorities on behalf of the church and received no response to their complaints.

It was in the next month, July, 1941, that Graf Galen,



Bishop of Münster, took his place in the public mind beside Pastor Martin Niemoeller as an outstanding champion of the Christian faith in Germany. The courageous bishop had long been fighting valiantly for his church against the Gauleiter but finally threw discretion to the winds in the week that Münster was terribly hit by the RAF from above and simultaneously by the Gestapo and party from within. He preached the sermons which were quoted, in part, in the previous chapter.

He protested to the local authorities who stated that the Gestapo was law to itself. He then sent telegrams to Chancellor Hitler, Goering, the Ministers of Interior and of Church Affairs, and even to the German high command, but received no satisfaction except for a notification that the telegram had been forwarded to Himmler, as head of the Gestapo! The text of the telegram was clear enough: "After the enemy had attempted on July 6 to destroy the city of Münster in terrible night attacks, the Secret State Police began, on July 12, to confiscate convents and monasteries in the city and its environs and to expropriate them together with their contents in favor of the Gauleitung (Provincial Party Headquarters). The inhabitants—innocent men and women, honorable members of German families, whose relatives are at present fighting as soldiers for Germany—were robbed of their homes and personal property, hunted into the street, and banished from the Province. I beg the Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor, in the interest of justice and the solidarity of the home front, to protect the liberty and property of Germans against the arbitrary action of the Gestapo and against the robbery in favor of the Gauleitung."

The confiscations continued despite the bishop's clear warning that this action, which originated in an abysmal hatred of Christianity and the Catholic Church, would sabotage and destroy national unity. It was, of course, the only argument which might have been heeded. In view of the regime's deafness he proceeded to let loose all his vials of righteous wrath upon the closing of Catholic schools, the Nazi

education of the Hitler Youth from which Christian instruction has been banned, and the loss of all personal liberty.

Again on August 3 in the Lamberti Church at Münster the bishop reported the fruitless results of his protests and the confiscation of two more convents, accompanied by false rumors of high treason among the monks. His sermon, however, was a daring protest against mercy-killing which was just beginning to attract public attention. He proclaimed the fact that the program was about to be extended into their own Westphalian Province and that he had taken legal steps with the district attorney to prevent it, but various transports of "unproductive" people had already been moved out of the province as a preliminary step to their execution.

Sermons were powerless to stop the confiscations altogether. As a consequence in certain sections of Germany, especially Austria, the churches are practically dispossessed of everything but their sanctuaries. The ecclesiastical establishments have been turned into SS barracks or Nazi welfare homes. Such confiscations cannot be excused as war measures and are not the fault of the army. A legitimate demand upon religious institutions in wartime is better represented by the use to which one of the big Catholic homes in South Germany has been put, namely, as an internment camp for approximately three hundred British women who are well cared for by the sisters. The necessity of requisitioning hospitals for the army is, of course, self-evident.

Incomplete as this itemization of anti-Christian measures may be, it cannot be concluded without mentioning certain Nazi policies which, while not aimed directly at the church, have struck at the accepted social standards of Christendom and are irreconcilable with the Christian ethic. Of these policies three will immediately occur to the mind of the reader: the (official) adoption of euthanasia or mercy-killing, the glorification of the unmarried mother, and the cold-blooded extermination of the Jews.

These radical departures from Christian ethical codes could not be viewed by the church with the same indifference

which, for example, might properly be evidenced toward other social innovations such as the labor camps, state subsidy of the family, state-sponsored German Worker's Front, "Strength Through Joy," or the all-embracing N. S. Peoples' Welfare Agency. Although they constituted an integral part of Hitler's peacetime policy, the intensive pursuance of these objectives in wartime indicated that they were not so much a part of the new Nazi ethic as of the new Nazi economy which was interested in men and women only in so far as they served as a political means to a political end. For the Nazis there is no moral issue involved, except as they have rewritten the moral code.

It was this immoral, or, if you prefer, amoral, approach to these moral issues which rendered the condemnation of the policies virtually unanimous, even including those individuals who up till then had had a good word to say for euthanasia, illegitimacy, and anti-Semitism. For, it must not be forgotten that mercy-killing has been under debate in Europe and America for many years and finds numerous protagonists among people who stoutly deny that they thereby forfeit their status as Christians and break the fifth commandment. Likewise, removal of the stigma from children born out of wedlock has been widely advocated by persons of unimpeachable moral reputation. And, finally, it was the Court Preacher of Berlin, Adolph Stoecker, who in pre-World War days championed the rather unpopular anti-Semitic cause from a Christian point of view until his views got him into serious trouble. Now, of course, he is a Nazi Christian hero.

In short, numerous attempts have been made to defend these departures from Christian doctrine by appealing to mankind's insatiable desire for improvement in moral standards. The Nazis, however, have never made any real pretense of excusing their brutal methods by claiming a universally valid moral basis for their policies. The most they claim is that the German nation will be physically strengthened to pursue its predestined mission in the world.

It is illustrative of the Nazi estimate of the value of human

personality that euthanasia is placed on the same level with anesthesia. A member of the state is put to sleep in the same way as a member or part of the body, namely, when he is only in the way. Public aversion to mercy-death is just as silly and superstitious, they say, as was the general aversion of the British public to the use of anesthetics at childbirth until Queen Victoria quietly settled the matter by permitting her own birth pangs to be artificially alleviated. The head of the German state however has not as yet emulated the Queen's example.

In any case, the practical question which the Christians under Hitler were called upon to decide in their own consciences had nothing to do with the essential rightness or wrongness of taking human life under certain hypothetically ideal conditions. The question was what, if any, moral responsibility a government which could not be called to account might feel in disposing of the life of your own parent, or friend, or friend of a friend, who had been committed in all good faith to an institution for the feeble in body or mind.

In August, 1940, a German pastor, boiling with helpless indignation, told me that the Gestapo planned to embarrass the nation of three-quarters of a million mental and physical invalids who were eating German food and absorbing the energies of healthy German doctors, nurses, and guardians. Some next-of-kin were the startled recipients of notifications that their relatives had "died" shortly after being transferred, without warning, to one or the other of three institutions which quickly became notorious. Other next-of-kin were frantically trying to withdraw their relatives from public hospitals and homes. William L. Shirer has given an excellent description of the whole incredible story in his *Berlin Diary*.

That the Gestapo—which again is credited with execution of this measure—did not stop at their own fellow countrymen was fairly evident from some cases which received the special attention of the Foreign Representation Section of the American Embassy. A number of British subjects had been

confined to German sanatoria and a few of them were shifted and soon died in the usual manner. In one outstanding instance, an asylum below Vienna continued to accept its monthly allowance from British funds for the maintenance of an insane woman several months after she had died. Only the aroused suspicions of the embassy followed by an insistent investigation forced the disclosure of the woman's death which was never satisfactorily explained. The continued claims for the living allowance were excused with the statement that the deceased was still in the sanatorium's debt for previous treatment.

The church institutions—notably the famous Bodelschwingh establishments at Bielefeld—and many private sanatoria refused to comply with the orders to transfer inmates to the Gestapo killing stations and, on account of the common public reaction to the grapevine messages which were being circulated on this subject, it seems that a halt was called. Just how many lives were lost—perhaps 100,000—in this massacre cannot be estimated with exactitude, nor is there any way of being sure that only the infirm were included. Later on a short film was made showing the hopelessly deformed human monstrosities in certain institutions and indicating that everybody would be much better off without them. The care with which only the most horrible specimens were placed before the camera smacked very much of the technique which is used by the Propaganda Ministry in selecting the most degenerate-looking Jews or prisoners of war for the newsreels so that Germans may be assured that the civilization carried by their Nazi armies is superior to any other.

The deliberate reduction of the German population by the wholesale slaughter of the aged and infirm was never intended to make more room for the already overcrowded Reich but rather to provide extra space for the additional tens of thousands of babies which German mothers were to be prevailed upon to bear. The Brown Shirt founders of a future German world empire had been faced with a

decreasing birth rate. The various steps taken to check this decrease are widely known, namely, marriage propaganda, tax reductions, family subsidies to be paid back in babies, and similar methods. The result has been that German girls can hardly wait to get married and have children. Although this policy inevitably produced some exotic and psychopathic phenomena, the Christian church, by and large, could raise no objection to a program which ostensibly fostered healthy and normal family life as a prerequisite for a sound social structure. But the ethical basis of this increase-the-population policy was just as dubious as that of the decrease-the-population policy. In the Nazi philosophy people are pawns in the game of power politics. In order to get a maximum number of children who can be educated to play their part in future plans for the aggrandizement of the Reich the old social taboos must be broken down.

One of the consequences of this policy has been to glorify the unmarried mother who disregarded old-fashioned shibboleths in order to fulfill what was defined as her duty to herself and to the state. It was commonly reported that SS men, as specially picked males of tested Aryan ancestry, had been instructed to avail themselves of every opportunity to mate themselves with equally healthy specimens of Aryan womanhood. With the outbreak of war German girls were told that, as mothers of children whose fathers were at the front, they would receive the same consideration as legal wives and mothers. Rudolph Hess himself set the seal of approbation upon promiscuity, provided it produced children.

In spite of the marriage rush of the first war year, it has been announced that the birth rate for 1941 was not so high as that for 1940. This may have been the direct cause of a new development in Nazi policy which was publicized in the press in the first week of December 1941. It provided for the establishment of a "Central Office" in the National Sick Insurance Organization to which all pregnant women who want to keep their condition a secret can apply for financial assistance for themselves and for maintenance of

the child. The address, as published, is Berlin-Charlottenburg, Uhlandstrasse 195-196.

This office, which is to be the only one of its kind in Germany, will take every precaution to prevent the identity of these mothers from becoming known. Application forms may be obtained from regular local physicians or midwives, who stand under professional obligation of secrecy, or they can be requested directly from the "Central Office." These forms, properly filled out and endorsed, are to be forwarded to Berlin by doctor or midwife, together with adequate evidence that the woman is a member of the National Sick Insurance. As evidence, a receipted premium stub, or the employment passport, or a declaration of the employers, or of the local party chief will do.

All correspondence in each case will be conducted in envelopes which give no indication of the contents, and money payments will be made to the applicant at a special address. These payments will be entered in the accounts in such a manner that neither the firm which helps to pay the sick insurance of its employees nor the local Sick Insurance offices can trace the expended sums and thereby discover the purpose to which they have been put or the person in whose favor they have been paid. "Secret" children born under the auspices of this plan will be supported until their eighteenth year.

Although nothing is said about the real reasons for this new proposal, a number of conclusions may be drawn. The Reich concedes that its glorification of the unmarried mother has not entirely erased the social stigma which attaches to illegitimacy nor broken down the inhibitions by which sexual relationships are controlled. Furthermore, in cases where girls have been reckless, it is likely that the government desires in this manner to salvage those lives which might otherwise be lost through abortion. It is highly probable that a vast majority of unmarried wives have not desired to become unmarried mothers, thus creating a medical problem of gravest concern. In a very real way, therefore, necessity has been made the mother of virtue. The directress of the

new office, when interviewed, merely stated that "women have often expressed the desire not to expose their motherhood to the public. Many kinds of reasons play their role from time to time, which are not to be debated here." It is strange, to say the least, to hear this statement made in the press of a nation which ordinarily suffers from no compunctions in exposing motherhood to the public eye.

The third of the planks in Hitler's social program which fell badly afoul of Christian principles was like the first in that it received no publicity in the German press. So far as official notice went, the inhuman transportation of Jews into Polish ghettos might have been nothing more than the horrible nightmare of some poor Jew who had fallen asleep over a vivid history of the Russian pogroms of the nineteenth century. Indeed a large part of the eerie, uncomfortable feeling which involuntarily takes possession of a foreigner after a few months' residence in Germany is the sub-conscious realization that newspapers are merely stage setting behind which incredible events are transpiring.

Little by little, as has been described, the anti-Semitic threats of the most virulent Nazi Jew-baiters had been divested of the unreality of prophecy and clothed with the actuality of history. It was not to be expected that the rigors of war would bring any alleviation of the sufferings of the German Jew; but it was not inconceivable that German ingenuity, preoccupied as it was by a full-scale conflict, would have postponed temporarily the pleasure of devising new tortures for a paltry half-million non-Aryans, who were already scared almost to death. On the contrary, the ingenuity and famous organizing ability of the Germans proceeded with the systematic extermination of the Jews just as though it was their only concern. Only one factor, it might be hazarded, had been left out of the calculations of Nazi racial theorists, namely, what to do with the German Jews who had been driven into other countries only to find themselves under the Nazi paw again as the victorious gray army swallowed practically all of Europe.



In any case, the Jews were not forgotten as the country swung into the second World War. During the first month, when everybody believed that the end of the Polish Campaign would be the end of the war, the Jews were deprived of their radio sets upon the double ground of preventing them from listening to foreign broadcasts and providing the boys at the front with the means of obtaining news and entertainment. In November came an additional levy to meet the billion-mark fine imposed on German Jews one year before because of the murder of Ernst vom Rath in the German embassy at Paris.

In the meantime the Jews had been given special food cards marked with a "J" which entitled them to minimum quantities of certain basic commodities. They were expressly excluded from the special supplemental allotments each month which, although they included only small amounts of eggs, chocolate, oil, canned goods, and later, fruit, gave some variety to the monotony of bread, potatoes, and cabbage. Furthermore, they had to go and get their cards each month at the local office instead of having them delivered to the door by the Nazi block-leader. As for clothing cards, Jews got none at all.

The full impact of the Nazi determination to pursue its policy of extinction even in wartime was felt when reports of the wholesale eviction of Jews from Stettin trickled into Berlin about February 14, 1940. All Berlin was shivering in the zero weather of an unusually hard winter. A second secretary of the American embassy, returning from Warsaw, reported temperatures of 35 degrees below zero Centigrade. Yet all the Jews of Stettin had been packed into freight cars and sent off to an unknown destination in the disorganized region to the east.

During the Western campaign of that year Jews were given a breathing spell, but in July the shopping hours for Jews were officially restricted to the one hour between four and five in the afternoon by which time everything was sold out anyway. Some stores which had anticipated the official decree fixing this shopping limit now put out signs stating their

refusal to sell to Jews at all. It was just at this time that the embassy's visa section on orders from Washington practically ceased issuing immigration visas and caused consternation among applicants in Germany. One of the principal reasons for this was the unscrupulous pressure exercised by the Gestapo over the families of emigrants, if the emigrant refused to serve as a spy in his new homeland. Later the immigration restrictions were again relaxed.

About August 15 it was announced that Jewish telephones would be disconnected after September 1. This was in line with other retrenchments in telephone service. An Associated Press correspondent, Al Steinkopf, returned from Warsaw in October, just one year after its capture, and reported that a wall had been built around the ghetto and that all Jews were wearing armbands and were being sent at every whim of a passing German to a delousing station. The second wholesale eviction of Jews occurred in southwest Germany at the end of October, 1940. Whole provinces were "cleaned out" on two-hour notice and seven thousand Jews were dumped into camps in unoccupied France where living conditions were reported by the representatives of U. S. relief agencies as appalling. Now the same Jews are being shunted back into Germany to work.

During that second war winter, as the housing shortage in Berlin and other large cities became acute, the Jews were gradually evicted from their apartments on short notice regardless of lease or age, and the Jewish Community was left to find new lodgings for them in areas where living space was at a premium. When the evicted Jews were first transported from Vienna in trainloads, it was reported that a "Jewless" Vienna would be Austria's birthday gift to Hitler two months later. Shortly thereafter a number of Christian pastors were arrested because they showed "too much interest" in the events in Vienna.

In the summer of 1941 there were house-searchings of Jewish homes in Berlin to determine by surprise raids whether any illicit fruit or fat could be found. These raids occurred shortly after nine o'clock when all Jews were sup-

posed to be at home. Those who were found to be violating the Jewish regulations were carted off to Alexanderplatz Prison or makeshift jails, such as the old YMCA building, and kept in uncertainty of their fate for ten days or two weeks. Finally they were released but subsequently conscripted for labor as a penalty for transgression.

The embassy knew exactly what was happening, not only from German sources but because American and British non-Aryans were constantly involved in clashes with the Nazi laws. Certain Palestinian women of Polish origin who were caught in Warsaw and Lodz by the German invasion had many adventures before an exchange of civilians was at last arranged and they left the country just three weeks before the embassy closed. After having been interned for almost a year, they were released and proceeded to get into all possible trouble with the authorities, for example, by registering for the annual ration of 125 grams of coffee (quarter of a pound), which was later to be doled out in two installments to good Aryans.

To add to their difficulties and ours, three of these women had been caught out of their lodgings at 9:10 o'clock on the fatal night of the first inspection. After their disappearance into prison and eventual reappearance, two of the women were compelled to work, despite their status as enemy aliens, but for some unknown reason the third was overlooked. One of them sorted rags all day and the other peeled potatoes. This work was done for private firms which drove an advantageous bargain to which their "employees" could not object. For instance, the potato peelers received two Reichsmarks for each hundred-weight of potatoes peeled. As most women could not begin to peel a hundredweight in one day, the average daily earning was about RM 1.20. Under the most favorable exchange, that is, the official one which no foreign business man or traveler ever uses, this is only fifty cents per day, but actually represents no more than twenty-five or thirty cents in "real money." Almost half of the amount went for carfare across the city. Besides, the peeler has to supply her own gloves, aprons, and midday lunch. The

upshot of it was that she actually paid to work from 7 a. m. to 5 p. m., or rather, she was paid from British Welfare funds.

Meanwhile, how about the employer? He had contracts to deliver peeled potatoes in huge quantities to the cafeterias of government offices and even to private restaurants. He bought his "raw material" at 4 RM per hundredweight and resold them, peeled, at RM 15. The only overhead was rent for an empty storeroom and, sometimes, trucking charges.

The status of foreign Jews in Germany remained anomalous up to September, 1941, when the "yellow star" became the requisite decoration for every non-Aryan breast. Until then some foreign Jews had escaped almost unscathed whereas others had suffered all the indignities accorded to domestic Jews plus a few extra ones for being technically of alien nationality. Most of the Jews with alien passports—and there were dozens of British among them—were really German, but exploited their right to a second nationality in the hope of weathering the anti-Semitic storm without leaving the country. However, with September, foreign Jews were put in the same general Jewish category except for the wearing of the yellow badge, which was a Davidic star about four inches across and inscribed with the word "Jude," or Jew. This had to be worn sewn on the outer clothing over the heart.

In the same month an estimated sixteen hundred Jews were transported out of Hannover, and it was forbidden for Jewish veterans of the World War to wear whatever decorations they might have been awarded. A month later trainloads of Jews began to leave Berlin for the ghetto at Lodz: 1,100 from Berlin and 2,000 each from Cologne and Frankfurt. And for the next couple months, up until the United States entered the war and our personal contacts were broken, large transports of Jews left for the east, some going as far as Riga. These deported persons were permitted to take only a few necessities with them. They were to be exposed to a severe winter without any hope of adequate food, clothing,

or fuel. And, besides, it became definitely known through the soldiers returning from the front that in occupied Russia, especially at Kiev, Jewish civilians—men, women, and babies—were being lined up and machine-gunned by the thousands. Lithuanians and Latvians were given a free hand by the Germans to wreak vengeance upon the Jews who had, according to reports, descended upon them at the time of the Russian occupation.

The German objective was extermination of the Jews and their method was murder. The church fighting a losing battle for its own life was helpless to mitigate this growth of terror or give any adequate comfort to non-Aryan Christians. With each new measure the suicide rate rose. At last, the valiant labors of the Protestant Committee for Christian Non-Aryans were brought to an abrupt end by the arrest of its courageous leader, Pastor Grüber, just before Christmas, 1940.

After that the Christian Jews were even more defenseless than their cousins of Jewish faith who had a central organization which was recognized by the government. One desperate German pastor told me that he could no longer conscientiously dissuade non-Aryans from putting an end to their miserable lives. Some of us made one final attempt in November, 1941, to secure the bringing of some two hundred non-Aryan Christian children to the United States but those negotiations were interrupted by Hitler's declaration of war.

War, in short, has given the German Church no respite from the hostile attention it has received since 1933. On the contrary, additional burdens have been placed upon shoulders already drooping with fatigue and discouragement. From the foregoing picture it may easily be seen that the church was in no condition to enter wholeheartedly into the war effort, yet it not only had to carry on with its work at home, but take up a new job with the army. It did not go to war in the strict sense of the word, but it had to follow the army. Here again, as we shall see, Hitler's hindering hand stayed at the church's throat.

## CHAPTER XII

### *The Church and the Military Machine*

ONE of the most potent pamphlets issued in Germany in the Christian cause was "Power and Light" (*Kraft und Licht*) published weekly by the Berlin City Mission. The name appears to have been borrowed literally from the "Berlin Power and Light Co." At the beginning of the fateful year 1937, in the same week in which Hitler celebrated the commencement of his fifth year as chancellor, this doughty little sheet carried a front page article which brought down upon the editor's head a severe reprimand for "falsification" of German history. The paper was threatened with suppression and, in fact, was soon forced to discontinue publication—but not for lack of readers. I was only one of very many people who paid two or three times the subscription price in order that the widest possible circulation might be assured.

The article in question carried a picture of Friedrich Wilhelm I, the "Soldier-King" of Prussia whose stern Christian piety was like that of the Pilgrim Fathers and whose economies and well-trained army enabled his son, Frederick the Great, to transform Berlin into a capital of primary importance. The theme of the article was a quotation from the old king: "If I build up the land and improve it, but make no Christians, everything I do will avail me nothing."

The piece goes on to relate how, on the misty morning of the Battle of Leuthen in which Frederick the Great was to defeat the Austrians, the soldiers solemnly broke forth into a hymn and how, as he heard it, "Old Fritz" said to one of his generals, "Do you not suppose that with such soldiers I am bound to win?" At the close of the same day as the weary troops were marching away from the field a grenadier raised his voice in another hymn, "Now thank we all our

God," and twenty-five thousand men joined him in the song. But, continued the article, the aftermath of these victories of the Seven Years' War was deplorable because the men and officers fell away from the piety of the old King. The final catastrophe came in the terrible defeat of Jena at the hands of Napoleon a half-century later.

The writer of the article was pointing a parable which the Nazis understood very well. Their one thousand-year Reich would never endure even for fifty years if they continued to disregard the Christian principles upon which true German civilization was built, not so much by the conquests of Frederick the Great as by the piety and industry of his stern old father who implanted the watchword *Pflicht* (Duty) in the Prussian soul and assigned the first chaplains to the army.

For better or for worse, it must be admitted that much of the strength of the German Army in times past has been derived from its close connection with the church which strongly supported the duty-concept in the popular mind and made of compulsory military service an acceptable national institution. The German officers of the old school recognized the value of spiritual discipline in maintaining the morale of the men, nor were they being hypocritical in their advocacy of Christian worship as an essential part of army life. The same officers were proud to be pillars of the church; they actively practiced their professed religion both at home and with the troops. This may have been due, to a great extent, to the custom in many prominent families of sending their sons either into the army or into the ministry, thus establishing what might be called a blood kinship between the two most respected professions; but the peculiar importance of the relationship derives to an even greater extent from the fact that the church and state were, as has been pointed out, united in the person of the ruler. This was true not only of the petty princes but of the German emperor who, as *summus episcopus*, felt equally at home on the reviewing stand and in the pulpit. On board his royal yacht and elsewhere Kaiser Wilhelm II conducted divine

minister. Some of his sermons were translated into English by a former pastor of the American Church in Berlin, Dr. James F. Dickie.

It was inevitable, however, that under these circumstances certain Christian teachings would be twisted in such a manner that they could be employed in justification of the type of militarism which has given a special and very unpleasant meaning to the word "Prussian." I have heard Prussians defend themselves with tears in their eyes against being singled out for opprobrium as heartlessly cold-blooded men of blood and iron. They point out that Hitler, the Hohenzollerns, and many others of Germany's most ambitious sons, including virtually all of the highest Nazi leaders, were not Prussian. On the other hand, they are proud of the Junker Bismarck who "knew when to stop," and of Hindenburg who loyally fathered the new Republic in the dark days of imminent anarchy.

However that may be, the Christian Church, which has always been an integral part of German communal life, was ineluctably enlisted to support every national cause, whether good or bad, and, in some Teutonic minds which had not outgrown the enchanting schoolboy vision of the German knights of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries who conquered and converted the Baltic area (including the pagan Prussians), it was felt that the cross and the sword still had a Germanic Christian mission to perform. As in the case of the Nazi Christians, this Germanic Christian mission was often more Germanic than Christian but, owing to the absence of an outright "Shintoist" cult, the German people were never aware that they might be worshiping two deities. To Hitler goes part of the credit for "dehyphenating" this Germanic-Christian tradition, but the major part of the credit goes to the Christian Church in Germany which steadily refused to answer the trumpet call of the Nazi crusade.

It is not to be wondered at that in some German minds Christianity became the handmaiden of war, especially during the struggle of Germany for her "rightful place in the



sun." After all, other nations have used religion for equally dubious purposes, but in Germany, unfortunately, this point of view was elaborated with the German's customary passion for perfection until war had justified itself so completely that Christianity became a hindrance rather than a help in the fulfillment of imperialistic dreams and was regarded by many of the militarists as a decided detriment to a proper martial psychology because of the fact that it embodied a doctrine of peace and brotherly love. The outstanding philosophical exponent of this point of view was Nietzsche, but the idea bore its richest fruit in the life and thought of Field Marshal Erich von Ludendorff who represents the culmination of "Prussian militarism" in imperial days and unquestionably represents the connecting link with the same thought forms in the Third Reich, whereas von Hindenburg is the symbol of the more conservative tradition of a "Christian" army.

It was Ludendorff who said that "war is the highest expression of racial life" and it was the Nazi army magazine, *Deutsche Wehr*, which stated, "War has become a form of existence with equal rights with peace. Every human and social activity is justified only if it helps to prepare for war. The new human being is completely possessed by the thought of war. He must not, he cannot think of anything else."<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, Christianity can no longer be useful to a military philosophy of that kind and the Nazi radicals have frankly taken the action necessary to clarify the situation. As has so often been said, Nazism is not really new in Germany, but is rather an undercurrent of political philosophy which was inherent in German thought and has now broken through to the surface.

In all fairness it should be pointed out that this exaggerated nationalism is not only not a purely Prussian characteristic but is not even purely German. One of the most rabid exponents of the "Germanic mission," for example, was an Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain of the famous

<sup>1</sup> Both quotations are from *They Wanted War*, by Otto Tolischus, former N. Y. Times correspondent in Berlin.

Chamberlain family, who became enamored of Germanism before the last war and had himself naturalized. In 1915 he published an essay entitled "German Peace," which was reprinted in 1942 in the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, stating that only in the German language is a real word for peace to be found because in other languages the term for peace signifies only the interval between wars.

"This German peace," states the author, "is an ideal, not of the cuckoo cloud-world, but attainable, providing that Germans will to do what lies in them, providing that they know how to become as strong inwardly as they are outwardly, providing that they sweep away their miserable political parties and parliamentary system with proper contempt so that the State may be perfected and guided as scientifically as the Army. Naturally that cannot be accomplished between today and tomorrow; only a forthright and forceful policy for a century and more—our outer strength supported from within by a conscious cultivation of that which is German and by a determined expulsion of that which is un-German—can give or rather mediate to our earth this highest blessing. For peace is a gift of God, else it is not a genuine peace, but only absence of war. And that God is nearby, very near, we in Germany today know full well; all of us feel His immediate presence; it is up to us, therefore, to *will* to do!"

Not a word of that essay needed to be changed for Hitler's purposes because Chamberlain, like Hitler, never bothered to define the God to whom he was referring. It is clearly evident from the fact that the army had come to be thought of as a model for the State that the diverging tendencies of German religious life were approaching the breaking point. The idea of a meticulously model German State, which can be traced back to Hegel who lived one hundred years before Chamberlain's words were written, became explicit under Kaiser Wilhelm II. That dream is still very much alive and by way of prophecy it may be said that, if the Hitler regime should succeed in riding out this war (which is, of course, impossible), the German nation would

undoubtedly continue to be regimented like the army even to the permanent rationing of clothing and food, to say nothing of an extension of the close civilian discipline already exercised in a system of "block leaders" and secret police.

The report of my conversation with two Nazi officers aboard the blacked-out train, contained in a previous chapter, provides an indication of the way in which the definitely non-Christian philosophy of Hegel, Chamberlain, and others has seeped down through the ranks and been given additional impetus by the Hitlerian ideology. It was felt by the Chauvinists of the nineteen-twenties that Christianity had forfeited its right to be the German religion, firstly, because it had failed the nation in 1914-1918 and, secondly, because the victorious "Christian" nations had imposed the unchristian Treaty of Versailles upon the defenseless losers. Nietzsche, who had branded the teachings of Jesus as an enervating and emasculating influence, appeared to have been justified by the tragic course of events which, it seemed, would never have occurred if Germany had not been "softened" by sentiments of mercy, tolerance, brotherly love, and so forth. It may sound strange to Anglo-American ears that this could have been the reaction to religion in Germany after the war, but it certainly played no inconsiderable part in the "philosophical" reconstructions of extreme nationalists. Of course, this group was not in a majority but its influence proved to be decisive. Ludendorff actually states in his account of the defeat that the German people before the last war had been tricked into a pacifistic attitude without any assurance that the enemy had been made peace-minded!

The rise of National Socialism is owing to no single cause, except perhaps the deep disillusionment of all Germans to whom military defeat was an incredible personal affront. Hitler promised to make it good and he set about the immediate reconstitution of the army which had always been the pride and joy of every citizen. In German eyes, the military had become the visible expression of moral strength

and the plight of an armyless country had deepened this conviction. As the average German was convinced of his own good intentions, and as he felt the army to be a piece of himself, he honestly believed that its officers and men could do no wrong and that they really constituted a guarantee of peace. Only under Hitler have doubts on this latter point begun to creep into the average German mind and it may be that ultimately the Fuehrer himself will be looked upon as the cause of the collapse of this myth; but not until it has been clearly demonstrated to the German nation that the disappearance of the German Army is not—as in the chaotic days of the Republic—synonymous with the evaporation of national integrity and moral strength. There is a confusion of identities here which will be especially hard to remove from the political thinking of any central European state.

For the cult of the Nietzschean superman it is carnival time on the continent. "Conscientious objection" poses no problem behind the Axis lines because there are practically no conscientious objectors, and—for that matter—no religious bodies which are historically pacifist, like the American Quakers or Mennonites. There are Quakers and Mennonites in Germany, but they cannot be pacifistic without committing suicide and they cannot protect their young men who might wish to avoid military service. For about two hundred years all young Germans who were opposed to conscription for religious reasons have made a practice of escaping from the country in order to find a new home among less warlike peoples, usually in places where plenty of open space reduced the likelihood of friction. Such emigrants have always been branded as deserters and treated as such if they ever tried to return to Germany. A large part of the work of the American consulates in Germany all through the nineteenth and even into the twentieth century was caused by attempts on the part of the German states to force visiting American citizens of German birth to complete their

military service even after an absence of twenty or thirty years.

It is impossible to say how many conscientious objectors have been summarily executed for refusing to serve in this war under Hitler. It is unlikely that any of them escaped from the country. Occasional notices of executions appear in Nazi papers from time to time with a brief comment to the effect that the young men belonged to some strange sect, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, which originated in America. The reason for this meager publicity seems to be based on the old Nazi policy of using a few horrible examples to keep the rest of the populace in line and blaming all un-German divergencies on malign influences. The number of objectors is probably very low, but by no means insignificant. A prison chaplain who was assigned to minister to condemned men told me in 1940 that such calls from conscientious objectors came to him on an average of once a week from the death house in one of Germany's largest cities.

The lot of the chaplain in the regular German army is not much happier than that of the prison chaplain who must minister to boys sentenced to die under the ax. It is true that many priests and pastors have been formally decorated for unusual courage, but all publicity regarding such distinctions for valor is reserved for propaganda purposes in foreign countries and banned from the local press. The treatment that the chaplain gets and the recognition that his work receives are directly dependent upon the religious viewpoint of his superior officers, that is, whether they happen to be Christian or pagan, and, if Christian, whether "German Christian" or "Confessional."

The pagan officers usually have no interest whatsoever in the rather ridiculous non-Christian cult practices which have attracted attention outside Germany, and they view the work of the Christian chaplain with complete indifference. Their interest is centered in the army and its own esoteric cult of discipline, duty, and death. The officers of the old school, however, are generally conservative or Confessional Christians who prefer to command religious men,

and very frequently they have been willing to permit pastors who were merely ordinary soldiers to conduct services and minister to the troops in the absence of regular chaplains. It appears that this laxity in military procedure has now been *verboten* by the high command, at least in the case of Catholic priests who are no longer permitted to carry their mass kits or even to ask for permission to do so. This indicates, among other things, that the work of such irregular "chaplains" had become so widespread and effective that Hitler himself felt called upon to stop it.

Between the pagan and Christian officers of the Wehrmacht stand the "German Christians" who represent a mixture of the old school and the new Nazi ideas. They would presumably get along best with the many "German Christian" pastors who found civilian parish life uncongenial and took eager advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate their faith in the justice of the Leader's cause by offering themselves as chaplains in order to enter directly into the heroic phase of the Nordic struggle. It is well known, nevertheless, that the Nazi Christian movement made absolutely no progress in the armed forces despite the spurious appeal of its doctrine of racial superiority. Either the soldiers threw their religion to the winds when they took up the weapons of war or they began looking for answers to questions which the "German Christians" were incapable of appreciating, let alone solving. It was apparent that, if there were any answers to the profounder queries, the Confessional churchmen had them. As a matter of fact, every one of the Confessional chaplains and soldiers to whom I talked reported enthusiastically regarding the new opportunities they had found to pour a flaming message of Christian hope into the lukewarm and indifferent hearts of the enlisted men—a message not of political revolt, nor even of dissatisfaction with the regime, but of a vital New Testament faith which will inevitably prove more destructive of Hitlerism than any other kind of moral sabotage. The Nazis know this and it is in opposition to the imminent recrudescence of the Christian faith that they have sponsored the publication of *Gott und Volk* which

disregarded the "German Christian" movement completely.

Thus there is the same kind of religious problem in the German Army as there is on the civilian home front, and it will become a factor to be reckoned with when the steel bands of discipline begin to give way under the pressure generated by forthcoming military reverses. Although the official attitude of the high command toward Hitler and his new state religion is veiled in discreet silence, the army bishops, both Catholic and Protestant, are decidedly conservative, if not Confessional, in the administration of their offices. The enthusiasm of the Protestant chaplain corps for Hitler's war may be judged by the scriptural verse which was quoted to me one day after I had talked with a member of the staff about the spiritual care of war prisoners and was ready to take my leave: "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

It must not be concluded from loose talk about anti-Nazi sentiments among the older officers, however, that they all are opposed to the Nazi regime and simply waiting for a good chance to take over the government. Military ambition in Germany is traditionally confined to the desire for a free hand to plan and wage war; it prefers to leave political details to a complaisant civil government. Hitler, while keeping a jealous eye on the supreme authority, really restored the glory of the military to the nation and, consequently, the army clique is not ungrateful. It is unlikely that there are as many scheming brains in the army as there are in the *Waffen SS*, which is Himmler's increasingly important "army within the army."

If a putsch were to occur, it would probably be staged not by the old army men but by this Elite Guard which is chock-full of unscrupulously ruthless opportunists who are like their Nazi leaders in that their thirst for power cannot be assuaged by Hitler himself without surrendering his own dictatorial prerogatives. They resemble nothing so much as a pack of wolves ready to fall upon anyone, including each other, in a vain effort to still an insatiable hunger. They

are the gangsters of Europe to whom their Fuehrer's grandiose ideals are merely so much sand in the eyes of more gullible people. Himmler, their leader, already holds the control of the home front in the palm of his hand; his arrogations of authority in the armed forces have been halted only with difficulty by Reich Marshal Goering's refusal to grant to the Waffen SS a Luftwaffe of its own. It is common knowledge that Himmler, through the Gestapo, already stands prepared to deal with any voices of discontent which may be raised in case of military defeat. Furthermore, he is in absolute control of the occupied countries, thus being in an undisputed position to run the New Order in Europe to please Hitler or himself.

Some day the regime will have to come to terms with this powerful agency within the government. It no longer looks as though Himmler can be eliminated with the same facility as Captain Roehm, whose murder in 1934 was accompanied ironically by the disgrace of the Brown Shirts and the rise of the Black Shirts. When the day of reckoning comes this time, either the SS will simply take over power or there will be the bloodiest civil war that any European nation has yet had. The first rumblings of internal tensions have long since been recorded but new ones are constantly occurring. The German people have come to fear the Gestapo more than the Soviets, and Himmler probably knows that the time is rapidly approaching when he must say to his satellites, "Now or never!"

This aspect of the military situation, though foreign to a discussion of the religious problem, has a real bearing on the future relationship of the German soldier to Christianity. The older officers' caste, generally speaking, believed in religion as a beneficial influence in the armed forces. The newer officers and the whole SS, who under the impulse of their Nazi sympathies have risen from the ranks, are not at all convinced of the need for Christian chaplains, but merely feel that the time for abolishing the chaplaincy has not yet come. Only the new Nazi units, namely, the Luftwaffe and the Waffen SS, are without chaplains, nor do they seem to



have forfeited any of their striking power on this account.

On the surface it is pretended that the chaplaincy system is maintained as usual. More than a year before America entered the war Miss Erica Schirmer of the German Short-Wave Radio, who is "German Christian" herself, took occasion to invite both the Catholic and Protestant army bishops to the microphone to reassure American Christians regarding religion in the armies of the Third Reich. These broadcasts described the history of the chaplaincy in Germany, and stated, of course, that the tradition is carefully nurtured today. The organization into military districts was depicted, as was the Army Hymnal. It was acknowledged that Catholic and Protestant services were frequently combined, except for the communion. The congregations were declared to be large, although attendance was voluntary. "The need of God's word is most evident."

This sort of broadcast from German stations, it must be remembered, is possible only over the short-wave radio to foreign countries. The only mention of the chaplaincy in the local press, so far as I know, came in the first months of the conflict when publicity was given to the funerals accorded to some of the first British flyers brought down over Germany. The brief article, which was intended to illustrate the "decency," if not the "piety," of Germans in wartime, stated that an army chaplain read the last rites for these fallen aviators and summoned the guard of honor which stood at the grave to think of themselves as representing the family and friends of the deceased who might have loving mothers in England.

Later I received from the Evangelical Church foreign office, which was honestly trying despite obstacles to do what it could for spiritual care of German prisoners of war abroad, some photographs of these neat graves at Wilhelmshaven with the request that the pictures and an account of the service be sent by way of the embassy's Prisoner-of-War Section to the British Foreign Office. This request our embassy was very happy to honor because it was in the interests of both belligerents to do everything that would conduce to

the best possible treatment of war prisoners. But there was more than a touch of irony in the original newspaper story, especially as chaplains presumably were not called upon to officiate at the funeral services of German airmen who crashed and no hint was given in the note of a desire for reciprocal treatment in favor of Germans fallen in England. Of course, the German press is reluctant to admit that Goering's aces ever crash. In any case, that was the end of public recognition given to army chaplains by the German press. Nor was there any hint in the newspaper accounts at Christmas and Easter of Christian services or celebrations at the front. There were many human interest stories coming from the bunkers and barracks, there were Christmas trees, gifts galore, and much music, but it was all "in the new spirit of comradeship" characteristic of relations between officers and men, between home and front, under the Third Reich.

It was hard for the ministers at home not to be able to communicate with the men from their congregations as freely as they wished. Not only was the sending of pastoral letters forbidden, but the private correspondence of the clergy with soldiers was censored and restricted on the grounds that it was harmful to the morale of the men at the front! Evidently the tremendous popular appeal of the Confessional "day of repentance and prayer" at the time of the Munich crisis, when Hitler's carefully induced war fever received a douse of ice water, had not been forgotten.

In the first war-winter, the *Schwarze Korps* published a long article about the place of the church in total war and entitled it "Missed the Bus," declaring very plainly that the church had lost its right to be considered a part of the Germany community. The pastors, said the article, had muffed a great chance to drop their little bickerings and rejoin the great new movement in support of the Fuehrer and his army. Oh yes, the pastors had written letters to the front, in order not to be outdone by the innumerable Nazi agencies which were "ministering" to the boys, but what kind of letters did the clergy write? "They write not out of

the deep urge of the German soul, which wants to do its part. They write like sick liver sausages, as though they resented the fact that so many laymen had also joined in the 'spiritual care' of Germans. They haven't a word to say about the meaning of this war. They do not pray for victory. The Herr Pastor from Buederick on the Rhine writes, 'May the Christ Child soon bring us that longed-for peace among men!' That is very pretty, but the Herr Pastor does not say what kind of a peace he wishes for us!" After quoting a number of such ostensibly demoralizing letters, the paper warns all preachers that their attitude in this matter is being noted and will not be forgotten when the day of reckoning comes.

As a matter of fact the extreme Nazis seemed to have every reason to complain of the church's procrastination in subscribing wholeheartedly to the war. After the first terrible sinking of the heart at the outbreak of war, the German people rallied with delighted surprise because of the Polish collapse. They were really winning and with amazing ease! An uneasy winter full of dark uncertainty and mounting doubt was succeeded by three brilliant campaigns to the north, to the west and to the southwest, bringing in Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. After the fall of France the old "Niederlaendische Dankgebet" was sung throughout the country because it was commonly believed that the British would not try to continue an apparently futile struggle. This was not, the dubious Germans thought, a repetition of the World War but of the War of 1870—only better. During the following winter internal conditions did not become radically worse despite the very severe weather but, when a feeling of failure began to seep into the incredulous public consciousness again as news of the extent of preparations for an invasion of England were circulated simultaneously with reports that devastating bombings of London and other cities had not achieved their real purpose, namely, of making an invasion practicable, the Propaganda Ministry and the menacing

Gestapo co-operated brilliantly in preserving the illusion that final victory was just around the corner.

Germans, of course, had and have no way of knowing what is happening outside the Axis, except in so far as they listen to the British Broadcasting Company programs, but these latter were sadly lacking in any news of major victories. For the first two years of the war the Nazi Propaganda Ministry could afford to be truthful because all the campaigns, at least on land and in the air, were proceeding more or less according to schedule. In short, the situation in this respect had not changed greatly from that in the first couple years in the previous war. Dubious at first of the veracity of their own high command, the people finally acquired a childlike trust in all communiqués just when unfavorable events began to require the falsification of news. Up to this year the international radio has not succeeded in smashing the seemingly airtight control which Goebbels has over the war reports that reach the nation, although many people listen to Moscow and London.

The Balkan victories of early 1941 reassured the Reich as to the unimpaired striking power of its well-organized forces but there was some doubt as to whether Hitler had not got his directions mixed. The theme song of the first year had been "*Wir fahren gegen Engelland*" (We are marching against England), a stirring battle hymn of which the people became heartily sick, and now they were asking, "What is the longest trip in the world?" The answer was, "England, because we have been on our way two years and haven't got there yet." Another quip, reminiscent of the sad experience of the first World War, was "*Wir siegen uns tot!*" (We are killing ourselves with victories).

The march against Russia, coming after the spectacular flight of Hess, left the general public speechless, which was of course the safest way to be. Of course, it had long since become habitual for the man in the street to refrain from indicating by any outward show of feeling what he really thought of any given situation, especially if it were a major crisis. I was in the grill of one of Berlin's biggest hotels when

the first news of Hess's flight was broadcast; so far as the reaction of the crowded dining room was concerned, a person who did not understand German might have thought that the announcer was merely reading the local "fair and warmer" weather report. Germany is a nation that has learned to reserve the expression of its pent-up emotions for whispered discussions behind closed doors. Therefore, neither the march on Russia nor the declaration of war on the United States brought any outwardly visible change to the apathetic countenance of the nation; but it may still be said that June 22, 1941, marked for many Germans a definite milestone in Nazi history, namely, as the day on which Hitler silently admitted that England could not be defeated. The more complex reasons for this sudden change in strategy were practically discarded, except by ardent Nazi apologists.

It was generally believed, on the other hand, by those who had come to credit the German land forces with invincibility that the overexpanded bubble of the USSR would collapse at the first incisive thrust of the Nazi saber. Not even the Germans who were friendly toward Soviet Russia retained any great degree of confidence in the ability of the Red Army to cope with the mechanized precision of the boys in field gray, but it was believed—or hoped—that the strength of the Nazi war machine would be dissipated in the vast reaches of Russian forests and prairies, thus inducing a deadlock which might be dissolved by negotiations with face-saving, if not honor, to all.

To some of Germany's Christians, many of whom had supported the Nazis only as a bulwark against Communism and all of whom had been bowled over by the Soviet Pact in August, 1939, this reversion to the anti-Bolshevist policy brought a tardy relief from the nightmare of a terrible fear; but to most of them the anti-Christian measures which had been taken in the first weeks of the same month by their own government left very little place for rejoicing. After all, not much difference was to be perceived between the Marxian method of slitting the church's throat and the Nazi method of strangulation. The reaction of a young Reformed minister

in one of the big port cities is typical of the feeling toward the regime at about this time. When I asked him why he was in the uniform of an ordinary private instead of occupying the pulpit of a civilian parish or serving as a chaplain in the army, he replied, "I would rather serve in the infantry as a common soldier than preach the sort of message that would be expected of me as a pastor." It is an interesting statement, in the rightness of which perhaps not all persons would be able to concur in view of the stubborn resistance of the Confessional church, but it reveals something of the struggle that was going on in the hearts of the younger men who are looking not so much for an absolute good as for the lesser of two evils. After all, it is a fairly familiar quandary in which some English and American Christians also find themselves.

For Germans it is particularly difficult to make a final choice between church and state, as is evidenced by the attitude of Nazis who for the most part leave the church with reluctance. I have seen the inner struggle of many Germans, from the professors in the universities who could not bring themselves to resist the encroachments of the new ideology on their clear convictions to the pastors who at the outbreak of war felt constrained to support the regime in an action which could not by any stretch of the imagination be thought of as defensive. I saw the wavering of stout minds, like strong trees bowing in a high wind. These were the same men who stood by the Confessionals at first, then repudiated the radical Niemoeller group until the insufferably pagan blasts of the Reich Church Ministry blew them back to their former position. They were not mere weathervanes turning in every wind, else they would have capitulated completely. But it is obvious that they extended too much mental hospitality to "extenuating circumstances" instead of looking essential facts squarely in the face and drawing the consequences. Thus, at the beginning of the war they temporized with the conclusions they had finally reached and permitted themselves the costly luxury of an additional hesitation.

It may be said, however, that the German Army for the

first time in its history has marched into war without the blessing of the German Church. Of course, the benediction of all pastors and priests goes along with the boys who leave for the front and sincere prayers are prayed for security from harm and a safe return to their homes; but, in spite of the formal petition for God's leadership of the Leader, what most Christian hearts are really asking God for is not a Nazi triumph but the miracle of a decent peace from enemies both within and without. In the original sense of the word it is an *aweful* thing to be present at a service where the spirit of worship is so strong that you involuntarily sense the thoughts of the worshipers focusing like an electric magnet in one powerful petition to the Almighty for release from ineluctable disaster. I have never participated in such services without being keenly aware of these inaudible pleas of the people when at the conclusion of the prayer the pastor perfunctorily adds a petition for Hitler as Head of the German State. If their hearts could be opened, I believe that the most humane prayer for Hitler that could be found in them would be that his blind eyes might be opened and his whole nature changed.

The Christian church did not enter the last war in this attitude of mind. On the contrary there was in 1914 a tremendous nationwide religious revival which dissolved all differences and united the nation for the first time in years. This unity, to be sure, was largely political and lasted only until doubts began to arise regarding ultimate victory, but at no time was there to be felt an antagonism between the Imperial House and the German Church. In fact, the church staunchly supported the state to the very end, except for the Catholic Zentrum party, because the elements of discontent in the nation were equally ready to criticize both the throne and the pulpit. Officially, the Protestant church felt no hesitation in absolving the regime of all guilt in the war and in blaming those who "for a long time had been spinning a net of conspiracy around Germany in secret and have now drawn it tight in order to strangle us." Upon this basis the Evangelical Church refused to entertain even the most indirect relations with enemy churches.

What a change, therefore, is to be observed in the conduct of Christian leaders at the outbreak of this present conflict! Exactly the same pretensions of national self-defense against conspiracy were advanced by the Nazi Government and millions of Germans swallowed the same old story all over again, but not the church leaders. There was precious little preaching on the piety of patriotic duty to uphold a noble army fighting to protect the country's boundaries. The Head of the State did not write a prayer for the war like the Kaiser's: "Almighty and merciful God, Lord of Hosts, in all humility we beg Thy mighty support for our German Fatherland. Bless the whole German Army. Lead us to victory and grant us grace to prove ourselves as Christians also in the face of our enemies. May we soon attain to a peace which will guarantee the honor and independence of Germany." Hitler, on the other hand, simply said, "We shall win!" and his confidence arose out of a preparedness which even the Kaiser could have envied and probably did. As pointed out before, Hitler's prayers are more like demands for God's approval than pleas for divine benevolence and he did not invite the co-operation of the clergy in the war effort. In 1939, therefore, there were no church services in the streets and open squares to satisfy the sudden floods of worshipers, nor were there scenes of wild jubilation because of the first sweeping victories. All of us who were in Berlin noted the strange reserve of the whole population; those who went to church did so because God's house was the one place where they could silently pour out their hearts without censoring their thoughts.

The sudden flight to the church in 1914 led to a flight away from the church in 1918, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the close association of church and state at the beginning of the war led to a strong desire to dissociate the church from the state on account of its close relation to the discredited militarism of the monarchy. With this development of the last war in mind, it will be interesting to watch the further evolution of the present church situation in Germany. On the basis of logic alone, there should be a



reaction in favor of the church when it becomes fully apparent that National Socialism will not produce the victory. Already there are plenty of signs that the people recognize in Christianity the only hope of opposing Nazism successfully, not so much as an organization as an ideology which did not die with the Second Reich.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *The Church and the New Order*

ON THE coldest Sunday of the coldest winter in fifty years I was brought by Major Popp from Nuremberg to Weissenburg in an army car over the ice-covered roads of northern Bavaria to inspect Ilag XIII on behalf of our embassy and to conduct services for the two-hundred English civilians who were housed in the outbuildings of the Wuelzburg Castle situated on a hill overlooking the town. As I entered the unheated castle chapel the cold seemed to grow more intense, but I found that the internees were all there, huddled together in overcoats and sweaters and warming each other with rueful smiles. The organist was playing a prelude and trying vainly to keep his fingers from freezing stiff, but he happily assured me that the men had been practicing some hymns since I had sent them some books after my last visit and now they were eager to show me what they could do.

With considerable regret I doffed my heavy coat and donned a thin robe. Taking my place on the thin, shabby carpet thrown over the chancel steps and controlling my chattering teeth and shaking knees by sheer will power I launched into the opening service. As the stirring notes of "O God, our help in ages past" rang out, the frosty breath of the men filled the room like a cloud and I knew that the Holy Spirit was in it. Never was there a more attentive congregation and never was there a preacher who tried more conscientiously to "warm up" to his message. Clouds of steam issued from my mouth with every sentence as I sought compensation for the lack of an overcoat by waving my arms like a windmill in the high, gaudily painted little pulpit which rose far above the motionless prisoners in the hard pews below. Impassively the warmly clad German officers sat in the rear row, one of them who knew English with a copy of my sermon in his hand.

There have no doubt been services held in more uncomfortable places than the little baroque chapel at Wuelzburg. One needs only to recall the rigorous devotions of medieval monks kneeling on the moist floors before their dark altars and keeping vigil throughout the long winter nights! But I doubt if the sacrament has ever been more gratefully received than by those Englishmen who had entered upon an internment which, for most of them, is not yet over.

Despite the ministrations of international relief agencies acting under the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1929 regarding treatment of prisoners of war, the lot of prisoners and interned civilians is far from pleasant. The problem of maintaining morale under such conditions is totally different from that of preserving good spirits in one's own isolated army camps or on board naval vessels on lonely patrol duty. Consequently when our embassy in Berlin undertook to protect the interests of France and Britain—subsequently of several other belligerents—a very important part of its work was devoted to enemy nationals confined behind barbed wire and bayonets. The Foreign Representation Section was set up and in the course of two years grew from a few part-time American officials and stenographers to more than thirty persons, including medical doctors of other neutral nations who helped inspect the camps. As a member of this Section almost from the very first days, I grew up, so to speak, with the files as they overflowed into tier after tier of steel cabinets, and I was in constant close contact with the energetic steps taken by the Red Cross, the YMCA, and other international agencies to organize their war prisoners' aid. Like the embassy, the Red Cross was to inspect all camps, but with the purely impartial aim of checking on physical welfare rather than with an eye toward protecting the interests of any particular nation. Furthermore, the Red Cross was to provide the interbelligerent postal system, with the main post office at Geneva, and to sponsor the transfer of supplemental supplies of food and clothing. The YMCA,

which was to look after the morale by encouraging educational and recreational projects, considered the spiritual welfare of prisoners and internees within its scope of work, but its representatives were not chaplains in any sense of the word.

At first there were very few prison camps for British and French whose national interests the embassy was representing.<sup>1</sup> Our embassy went to work quickly and efficiently, long before the international agencies had a chance to swing into action. Within a couple weeks First Secretary Jefferson Patterson, who was placed in charge of the P. O. W. (Prisoners of War), and Treasury Attaché Erwin May—subsequently, Second Secretary James Riddleberger—who took charge of Civilian Interests, had the situation well in hand. For their conscientious, unselfish, and persistent labors in the protection of the interests of the British, Canadian, Australian, French—later, Belgian, Luxembourg, South African, and Egyptian governments—our Foreign Service officers merit unqualified praise.

By November, Mr. Patterson was off on the first of a long series of frequent visits to the camps. Permission was obtained for me to follow him one week later, not only to check on the execution of certain changes promised by the commandant of a *Stalag* (*Stammlager*: permanent prisoner camp) in the Munich area but to undertake the first full inspection of the first *Ilag* (*Internierungslager*: civilian internment camp) below Nuremberg. Permission was also granted to hold the first religious service in the English language at the latter camp.

Among the *Stalag* prisoners, who were exclusively French and Polish, there was a French priest who conducted mass in a corner of one of the two huge tents which were assigned to the French as living quarters. Later the Poles took the initiative in arranging an impromptu chapel in one of the buildings which, in the course of the winter, were erected to house the men who in the first bitterly cold weeks slept under can-

<sup>1</sup> Polish interests were represented by the Swedish legation until the Polish government ceased to be recognized by the Germans.

was on the straw-covered earth of what, only a couple months before, had been a beet field.

The British and French civilians were interned, as indicated above, in an old castle, picturesquely situated above the Bavarian town of Weissenburg. Picturesqueness is not an indispensable quality in prison camps but the view from the outside windows of the sprawling irregular quadrangle over a wide moat was enticingly lovely. It invoked dreams of freedom, which became more vivid after the camp became overcrowded with new recruits, principally Belgian and Dutch, from the countries which were occupied in the spring of the following year. Moreover, living in a castle is not particularly conducive to contentment if one is restricted to the rude wings which were obviously never designed for distinguished guests. Even then the living conditions, owing to the fact that the great Schloss had been converted by the Nazis into a summer center for teachers, would not have offered grounds for serious complaint if the heating and bathing facilities had been adequate. Small iron stoves in the dormitories provided the only warmth there was and the supply of water, as well as of tubs or showers, was insufficient. When the severe cold came, the pipes froze up completely. The value of our embassy inspections became apparent immediately when we learned that the men had been sleeping on the floor until the warning of our arrival caused the commandant to set up the bunks which had been locked away in store-rooms, presumably reserved for the teachers' summer school.

Nevertheless we were able to write favorable reports of the conditions in most of the camps after the first weeks of readjustment had elapsed and the problems which not even the all-seeing German military eye had anticipated had been solved. Wherever abuses or negligence were to be found there were invariably careless or indifferent commanding officers who resented being relegated to guarding enemies or lacked the energy to get things done. Many of them were reserve officers drawn unwillingly out of a comfortable civilian life; they thought the war would soon be over.

As all other questions were gradually settled, it became

apparent that there was one matter which no one had any interest in tackling, namely, a satisfactory arrangement for religious services in the camps. As pastor of the American Church I was deeply interested. German pastors in towns near the various camps had volunteered their services immediately and in some instances a working agreement was made with the individual commandants whereby a program of services could be carried out. For example, clergymen would visit the camps or groups of the men would be taken under guard to the village church. The latter arrangement was suitable for Catholics, but Protestants who had no knowledge of the language derived little satisfaction from the German services and so, in such cases, an attempt was made to find an English- or French-speaking pastor in the vicinity.

It was apparent that this makeshift arrangement was very unsatisfactory. For one thing, there were a few prisoners and interned civilians who objected to the ministrations of German clergymen and there were also some "German Christians" who refused to minister to their "enemies." The number of such cases was very small but had to be taken into consideration. Where there were chaplains with the men it was preferred to let them continue their work under the supervision of the German officers, but in several cases it proved difficult to obtain the co-operation of the competent authorities. Moreover, these chaplains were without any of the hymnals, Bibles, and other equipment which was almost essential to their work. The British pastors in the Ilag were never permitted to preach at all but could conduct Bible classes in conjunction with the camp's educational program.

Meanwhile an International Chaplaincy Commission had been set up in Geneva and I was asked to make what arrangements I could to promote the cause of Christian care of war prisoners in Germany. From my vantage point in the embassy I had already dispatched all the hymnals and Bibles I could find, along with books from our American Church library, to the various camps and to the German pastors who desired to have them in English for their voluntary work. The YMCA which, under Mr. Tracy Strong, was keenly inter-

ested in this aspect of war prisoner aid promised to assume the responsibility of importing Bibles and songbooks along with other reading matter and study material. As my embassy work prevented my going regularly and frequently to the camps which had already become fairly numerous, I enlisted H. Gruber Woolf, Pastor of the American Church at Dresden who was also supplying the American Church in Munich, to undertake the arduous trips which regular camp visits would require. So far as we knew, we were the only two American clergymen left in Germany.

Our hope that adequate religious provision could be made for the prisoners was short-lived. Mr. Woolf made an extended circuit of the camps in the west and I made a couple trips to the south which included the bitterly cold day described at the beginning of the chapter. Then the high command raised difficulties which ended in a flat refusal of further permission to hold services. We had complied, we thought, with every condition made by the authorities before we set out, including the submission of our sermons to the camp censor who kept them to be filed with the high command; but the embassy's requests for an explanation of this abrupt refusal went unanswered until it was learned indirectly that the reason for it lay in a few old American periodicals which Mr. Woolf had left at one of the camps where, it was added, the prisoners had been encouraged to sing "Tipperary" and "We'll hang our washing on the Siegfried Line" during a song fest after the service. These two heinous "offenses," committed with the apparent approval and in the very presence of the local camp commander, effectually stopped the chaplaincy project before it had had a fair start.

Indeed, it became increasingly difficult, as the months rolled by, to get permits to visit the camps at all, and even Mr. Patterson, whose genial hospitality and magnificent luncheons had completely disarmed and, one might even say, demoralized the staff officers, was taxed by the OKW (German High Command) with taking too tireless an interest in his protégés. Mr. Patterson had made a point of bringing together all the persons upon whose co-operation the welfare

of the war prisoners depended, including, for example, army officers, German and International Red Cross officials, American and International YMCA executives, Foreign Office men and members of our embassy staff. Regaled with such a quality and quantity of food as was to be had nowhere else in Berlin, these occasions—by the time one or two Danish turkeys had been consumed—were a feast of reason and a flow of soul. Thereafter telephone conversations, correspondence, and visits to German offices became very much less difficult. Many prejudices and incipient animosities were overcome or retarded in growth despite the increasing anti-American propaganda. But by the winter of 1940-41 the army requested that the last of the American YMCA workers be withdrawn, leaving Danish, Swedish, and Swiss on the field, and it was apparent that American embassy inspections were tolerated only because they could not be stopped without causing an ugly incident.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1940, the army told us that German chaplains would be assigned to the camps. It was probably presumed that the embassy would take a polite hint and drop the matter; but I, knowing that there were not enough chaplains for the German Army, took occasion to call on the Protestant Feldbischof, Dr. Dohrmann, to offer the full co-operation both of the embassy and of our Berlin Church in carrying out this new and highly important task. Dr. Dohrmann—a man of the old school who had conducted President von Hindenburg's funeral services—let me know that he was well aware of the special qualities which a chaplain ministering to enemy prisoners would have to have, and his description of the sort of men he would choose for the work was very reassuring. I knew some of the men he proposed to sign up for this purpose and was delighted to find that no attempt was being made to impose "German Christians" upon the prisoners who would then have had every reason to boycott the services. But perhaps that is part of the reason why this arrangement too was short-lived. Apparently the chaplain system got under way and functioned for a while; I continued to receive letters from pastors



in various districts who wanted hymnals or volumes of sermons in English. But the next thing we heard was that German clergymen were not to be permitted to conduct services for war prisoners or minister to them in any way. It seemed as though all prisoners were in this respect to be reduced to the level of the Polish soldiers who, spread out all over the country in small work detachments, were not only forbidden to have normal social intercourse with Germans but also barred from regular German church services.

At this juncture the army stated that enough Protestant and Catholic chaplains had been captured to provide one for almost every camp. This was approximately true but it was also true that nearly all of them—some thirty or forty—were at that same time in one camp. Just how, or if, they were eventually distributed, we never were able to learn exactly. I wrote twice to two of them whose names and addresses I had but never received any reply.

The only other services I was allowed to conduct were for the interned British consular officials during their stay at Rheinsberg, a summer resort residence of Frederick the Great north of Berlin. This permission was granted by the Foreign Office which was fairly lenient in the treatment of persons of diplomatic status. Before these people were moved to Bad Neuenahr, which was almost as far away from our Berlin embassy as it was possible to get, we were permitted to visit them informally and they were allowed to walk freely around the town or even go to the cinema. For our religious service we obtained the use of the little old church and there was no question of censoring anything I said. As there were no more children in our Berlin Colony, our Sunday School material was sent to Rheinsberg for the youngsters of the British party. Of course, these officials who had been stationed in Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Belgium had never expected that they would not immediately be exchanged, but the Germans found a number of reasons for disregarding diplomatic privileges. The ramifications of an exchange of hostages of any category are too involved to be examined here and it must be admitted that none of the

belligerent governments in this war is to be recommended for an expeditious handling of such matters.

By the end of the first winter the Red Cross and the YMCA were working smoothly and effectively at their respective tasks. Food parcels from Britain flooded the camps to such an extent that it became necessary to request that the number of packages be sharply reduced. At Ilag XIII the commandant indignantly reported that the men were living largely from their parcels and attempting to destroy the food provided by the camp. One of the guards brought in a large basket full of German bread which had been thrown out of the windows into the castle moat or among the bushes. We did not blame the men for not eating the monotonous fare nor for attempting to prevent its return to the kitchen, but we pointed out that their wastefulness might be made the excuse for cutting down their rations which would become a serious matter if, for any reason, the flow of parcels ceased. Another ill result of this piling up of parcels was that it caused disputes among the beneficiaries, some of whom wanted to consume them immediately upon reception while others sagely wished to save some of them for a rainy day; but on the whole there was no doubt that these parcels perceptibly improved the camp diet and morale, and also provided very tangible evidence that Britain had food at its disposal. The camp guards—eventually all of Germany—heard of those parcels packed with tinned meats, tea, tobacco, chocolate, and a score of other excellent articles.

The YMCA had started supplying books, musical instruments, and athletic equipment, to say nothing of filling special orders for all kinds of personal items. A few of the orders could still be filled in Germany but almost everything made of metal, leather, or rubber had to be imported. The job was enormous as I found out when I visited Geneva in the summer of 1941 and was shown the shipping rooms in the annex of the old Palais Wilson. The bargaining power of the YMCA executives lay in the fact that they were willing to work in the war prisoner camps in England and Canada, thus

helping German prisoners more effectively than the Nazi regime could do. When Mr. Strong came back from a trip through the Canadian camps and reported on the work being done by the YMCA among Germans, the OKW. was so pleased that it permitted more YMCA workers to be stationed throughout Germany but, as said before, it soon banned Americans in favor of Swedes and Swiss who presumably would be more amenable to control.

I am indicating what these agencies were doing and what they were permitted to do in order to contrast these privileges with the constant blocking of every effort to promote religious work among the prisoners and internees. The Foreign Office of the German Evangelical Church set up a special committee under a young pastor by the name of Peters, formerly at the German Church in Nice in southern France, who went energetically to work in an effort to bring the German Church to German prisoners of war by mailing religious letters and booklets to the camps in England and elsewhere. Presumably the German Catholics had a similar committee. This religious front was well organized and it appeared to enjoy government sanction but, judging by the samples which I saw, the communications issued by the Protestants were not of a nature to occasion violent objection in the Nazi press. The meaning of Easter in one of them was fairly well hidden under layers of art work, poetry, and sentimental talk about crocuses bursting from German soil in the springtime. The hard-pressed church was doing what it could to impress its abiding spirit upon the men who perhaps might now have the leisure to think about it, but it is doubtful whether its efforts did more than inspire a warm flood of sentimental childhood memories in the men who might be homesick. At any rate, even that work has been halted by the order of the authorities restricting the use of paper for religious purposes.

An indication has already been given of the presumptive desire of Nazis to pry the army loose from the church first by encouraging interconfessional services for both Protestants and Catholics and secondly by discontinuing services

under the simple expedient of providing too few chaplains for a vastly swollen Wehrmacht. During the last war there had been a similar paucity of clergy in uniform requiring a certain amount of interconfessional co-operation, but that was caused by a different set of circumstances arising out of the multiplicity of German states—and churches—within the Empire, all of which had different chaplaincy regulations. Therefore, the two situations cannot be compared. It need only be recalled that the present government takes pride in doing anything it wants to do, especially for the warriors of the nation. If it had seemed desirable to provide adequate religious care, Hitler would have seen to it.

Take the amusement program, for example! Nothing has been left undone to provide the men in uniform with a lavish variety of entertainment. The program is carried by Dr. Léy's organization *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy) which is paid for by compulsory deductions from workers' wages. It has become one of the wealthiest projects of its kind and had gone so far as to build its own ocean liners—which, incidentally, became admirable transports and hospital ships at the outbreak of war—for vacation cruises at sea. Now the tremendous resources of the organization have been applied to the goal of providing all armed units with regular concerts, shows, lectures, and films. Enormous tax-free fees are paid to the best artists in Germany for their trips to the front. Even the most immature pianists have discovered a veritable gold mine in the tours which range from northernmost Norway to Greece and Africa, although the pianos they often have to use are at anything but concert pitch. Libraries full of Nazi—*nihil obstat*—literature are assiduously circulated and, if possible, university extension courses are offered to special students who may even be given leave from the army for a semester to attend regular classes.

It is logical to assume that if the regime felt that an encouragement of Christian faith were desirable in maintaining morale nothing would have prevented the full exploitation of religious services by the "Strength through Joy" organization or the Propaganda Ministry which, of course, con-

trols the scores of newspapers now published within the army or in the occupied countries. Stated inversely, the much-publicized freedom of religion under Hitler would simply cease to be professed if the totalitarian state were to decide that the Nazi movement would be strengthened by—let us say—obligatory church attendance. Having made up their minds that the church could not and would not be of material assistance in fighting this war, Hitler and all the little Hitlers are deliberately trying to cut it out of the communal life of the people. It is probably the most fortunate accident of the present century that National Socialism and Christianity have proved to be so utterly uncongenial; at least, in studying the enormous strength of the Nazi movement, I have often been led to wonder what would have happened if the full force of the whole German Church, both Protestant and Catholic, had been placed at the Fuehrer's disposal.

If Hitler had succeeded in infatuating the German Church, Europe's "New Order" might have appeared to the conquered countries and to the United Nations under a less ugly light. Then the ecclesiastical leaders of other lands might have been prepared to give the New Order a warmer welcome. It is interesting to note that the prophets of the Nazi new era appear to have expected from other peoples the honor which they had not received in their own country. At any rate they began their administration of conquered lands by courting the church which could be of tremendous help in pacifying an irate populace. Nazi persistence in this respect is somewhat awe-inspiring because they never seem to have surrendered their rather naïve hope that some day, somewhere they will find a church body which will demonstrate a commensurate degree of "understanding" for Hitler's altruistic aims.

In every instance the Nazi conquerors have been forced to abandon the pretty disguise of "benevolent protector" because the reports of their rough methods of courtship and their reputation for hostility to the Christian faith had

preceded them everywhere, and no church leaders were willing to accept specious promises in view of what had happened to the German Church. As a consequence, the apostles of the new ideology discovered that the churches outside the Reich feel an even more marked antipathy toward National Socialism than do the churches at home where some effort had been made to effect a compromise for the sake of national solidarity. In the occupied countries national solidarity required that no compromises be made with the invader. The decision to resist was greatly facilitated by the sort of missionaries who brought Nazism to them, namely, the SS and the Gestapo into whose hands the control of Europe has been entrusted. Although Himmler's hold on the Ministries of War and the Interior is very strong, his grip on what used to be the affairs of the Foreign Office is even stronger. No matter whether the nations of Europe are occupied by the German Army or allied to the Axis it is Himmler's men who hold the key positions controlling policy. When this insignificant-looking little man decides the time is ripe for an exhibition of real power, he may prove to be stronger than the Reich Marshal himself. The churches of Europe are not unaware of the catastrophic implications of this situation. The conduct of the Nazi invaders has left no doubt that their bitter hatred of Christianity within the Reich is not to be confined to the Reich, nor to the German churches of the diaspora.

The impact of Nazi domination on the Norwegian Church has been keenly felt in America where indignation has boiled up at the miserable treason of Vidkun Quisling. Bishop Berggrav, primate of the Lutheran State Church, led the revolt against the puppet government and practically all of the Norwegian pastors followed him. After a year of quiescence immediately following the occupation, the church courageously brought the fight into the open, forcing the regime to extreme measures including arrests and concentration camps. The issue is not, as the Nazis would like to have the world believe, a political one. Berggrav had even

agreed to the elimination of the names of the royal family from public prayers in that first year of difficult readjustment and his motives were widely questioned in America. He knew that private prayers for the king could not be successfully forbidden and no one who has ever heard him speak—as I heard him, for example, in January, 1940, in Berlin—could doubt what his real feelings were. Therefore, when the central bases of Christianity itself were attacked, as was bound to happen, he took a clear-cut stand.

In July of this year six leaders of the Norwegian Church, in the absence of the arrested bishop, openly renounced any connection with the Quisling regime and set up an independent church divorced from the State. Its constitution is in many respects like that of the Confessional church in Germany and it is based on the illegality of the new church government. It was, of course, intolerable that Quisling should arrogate to himself the royal prerogative of naming bishops to replace the arrested men. The upshot of a nationwide revolt against these high-handed measures was an order from Hitler to Quisling to make peace with the ecclesiastical authorities. The Fuehrer was obviously not interested in the spiritual welfare of the Norwegian people, but he was concerned lest the religious struggle lead to political upheavals in a land where the United Nations might first try to establish invasion bridgeheads. Quisling in his disgruntlement announced in September, 1942, that the whole question was unimportant. Intense efforts are being made in Norway, however, to link the youth of the country with the Nordic cause and enlist the young men for service in Russia. Results have been negligible.

The Danish Church has thus far escaped a direct conflict with the new ideology, but the religious revival which began with the Oxford Group movement a few years ago—whose reverberations echoed with especial force in the smaller nations of Western Europe—has been deepened and widened by a new concern for the future of the church. Recently, the Nazis have given indication of their determination to complete the conquest of Denmark for the New Order.

In Holland the situation is much more serious owing to the co-operative resistance of Protestants and Catholics against the persecution and deportation of Jews from the country. The single spirit of the two confessions is the more remarkable because of the distrust and antipathy which divided them sharply before the war. The various manifestoes of the responsible clergy have not minced words in condemning every Nazi innovation since the occupation, and the Nazis have retaliated by inaugurating the same oppressive measures which had been tested by time within the Reich. Unfortunately there are pastors—I've talked with them—who would like nothing better than a complete annexation of Holland to Germany, which is undoubtedly what the New Order implies for the Netherlands as well as Denmark, but the majority of the Dutch clergy may be counted on to fight this project to its bitter end. As in Norway an effort is being made to seduce the youth with heroics, "crusades," and solstice ceremonies. On good authority I learned before leaving Berlin last December that not more than three hundred volunteers had entrained for the Eastern Front in spite of the barrage of propaganda and publicity. Mussert and his Dutch Nazis, like Quisling and his satellites, have their work cut out for them in trying to change the political inclinations of a nation that lived comfortably and ate well under the benign reign of the House of Orange, which is linked with the people since the unforgotten days of Spanish tyranny.

The situation in Belgium is much less clear-cut owing to the disgruntled Flemings who have always flirted with Germany in order to play off the heavy French influence exercised by the Walloons. The Rexist (Christus Rex!) and other Belgian Fascist movements found their strongest support in the northern, or Flemish, section of the country. However, the German occupation of the last war has not been forgotten, nor the spirit of Cardinal Mercier who became a flaming symbol of patriotism. His spirit lives on in Cardinal van Roey who has not hesitated to speak out against the Nazi overlords in the same tones used by the Catholic prelates of



Holland. Even in 1939, while crossing Belgium on my way to England, I was astounded to hear a Fleming say that the only way out of Belgium's impasse was by way of incorporation into the British Commonwealth of Nations! Regardless of this viewpoint, it is a fact that far more Belgian workers have enrolled for labor service in Germany than any other European nationals. It may be argued that unemployment and starvation conditions forced them to this step but, after talking with hundreds of voluntary laborers of all nationalities, I reluctantly came to the conclusion that most Belgians who came to Germany were driven by nothing nobler than a selfish desire for personal profit. Indeed, many of them came to the American Embassy to inquire about the possibility of naturalizing themselves in Germany, not because they had fallen in love with Hitler, but because they were attracted by a sense of economic security which they had not known at home. And many of these applicants were Walloons who spoke only French. It must be concluded that they have not been influenced by the standpoint of their church which, despite the threat of reprisals, has refused to sanction the "crusade" of the puppet leaders against Bolshevism or to conduct funeral services for the collaborationists. So far the presence of King Leopold has somewhat embarrassed the Nazis who hoped to make of him an amenable tool, but actually the fate of the country has been very little different from that of Norway and Holland which, the Nazis say, were "deserted" by their cowardly rulers.

In Luxembourg the chief Catholic papers were silenced at the very moment of occupation, but the resistance of the strong little church to German pressure has grown in spite of the fact that the Luxembourggeois were disappointed at the cavalier way in which they were handled after the last war. The hundreds of citizens who resided in Germany at the time of the invasion were soon encouraged by their new masters to discard their Luxembourg passports in favor of German papers; but most of them refused to do so until the German police simply took advantage of the fact that enemy aliens must report once a week to the local police station and

arbitrarily inserted an extension of validity just as though the American Embassy were no longer charged with the Grand Duchy's interests. Now, of course, Luxembourg has been honored with annexation, but it is altogether likely that Consul Waller, at whose departure in June, 1941, the whole Duchy wept, will be cheered lustily when he returns: he told the crowds which came to see him off that he would come back and bring the Grand Duchess with him.

The French nation is as spiritually bankrupt as the Belgian and, in the opinion of many persons who know Europe well, it will be decades before France again throws off the moral lethargy into which she has sunk. At its core, namely, among the people of the soil, France is sound but the whole social superstructure must be rebuilt. The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century has borne its last bitter fruit in Vichy where—paradoxically—Marshal Pétain is now, at long last, trying to revitalize the nation with a return to religion. Pétain's diagnosis of the root of the nation's difficulty is correct. Nominally a Catholic nation, not more than one quarter of the people retained even the most tenuous of connections with the church. And, with the loss of Alsace, French Protestants number less than two million. Both churches have asserted themselves vigorously since the horrible awakening which came with the rout of the armies, the smashing of the futile Maginot Line, and the Armistice at Compiègne, but the long uphill climb has only begun.

At first the French Catholic leaders supported the Pétain regime enthusiastically, just as Spanish Catholics supported Franco and German Christians supported Hitler, because they foresaw a new era of government along confessedly Christian lines. The policy of Laval, however, has disabused the hierarchy of any illusions that Vichy was primarily interested in the spiritual welfare of the people. It was reluctantly admitted that once more religion was to be made the tool of the state for the accomplishment of dubious political ends. While Hitler prated of noninterference with

the internal affairs of a vanquished opponent, the French State was to be remodeled on the exact plan of the German State so that Frenchmen would eventually be made to think and act just like German Nazis. French Christian leaders hastily improvised their defenses by refusing to sponsor the French Nazi "Legion" against Bolshevism, by declining to expel non-Aryan members from youth groups and other church organizations, by strengthening the opposition of the *Jocist* (Young Christian Workers movement) groups to all collaborationism, as well as by issuing pastoral letters and manifestoes in criticism of the new racial and political doctrines. In addition to this the churches have taken upon themselves a large part of the enormous task of ministering to the tens of thousands homeless refugees who had flooded unoccupied France.

It remains to be seen whether Christianity can make its influence felt to any appreciable degree in the homeland of so-called "free thought" where the militant atheistic philosophy of Voltaire has produced disastrous results in the religious life of the nation. Up till now the German Ambassador in Paris, Otto Abetz, does not seem to feel that the Catholic Church represents an adversary of formidable proportions, and Laval has continued serenely with his plans for deporting Jews and trading three French workmen for each war prisoner released from German camps. Both Darlan and Laval must, however, have had some fear of the church as was indicated by the suppression of certain papers, the jamming of the Vatican radio, and the arrests of a few outspoken priests. In all fairness to the French it must be said that whereas a half-million Belgians jumped at the chance to come to Germany in the first year after the conquest, not more than one hundred thousand French men and women volunteered or were successfully tricked into entering German factories; but it is by no means certain that this hesitation was caused by patriotic sentiments or moral scruples. It remains to be seen whether Hitler's occupation of all France will bring any great alterations.

In the Slavic countries—Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, occupied Russia, including the Baltic States—the story of Nazi hostility to the church is monotonously the same no matter whether the animosity is expressed directly by the conquerors or by the local Quislings. The churches which have been most affected are the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox. Owing largely to a bitter rivalry between the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox hierarchies in Yugoslavia, religion among the South Slavs—though badly tainted with politics—is a vital force which, under the present circumstances, has been largely redirected toward one goal, namely, the expulsion of the invader; although reports from the chaotic “Kingdom” of Croatia indicate that the Roman Catholics have used the opportunity to avenge themselves on the Orthodox Serbs for previous oppressions. It is stated that the Catholic Croats aim to eliminate Orthodox leadership and have already assassinated many of the clergy, but it is difficult to believe that the Papacy is party to these plans which smack more of Fascist technique for giving a “crusade” touch to its conquests.

The Catholic Church of Bohemia and Moravia in former Czechoslovakia has suffered along with the local Orthodox church which has lost some prominent leaders, including a bishop, by execution in connection with the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. It appears from authenticated reports that all religious periodicals and church-affiliated organizations have been suppressed, but no local Quisling has been found to help with the Nazification of the stubborn Czechs.

In Poland where the history of the church is scarlet with the strife of the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, both confessions have been driven to the very brink of total dissolution. For more than twenty years the Polish government systematically helped to suppress the Russian Orthodox Church which had established itself firmly during a long century of Imperial Russian state-churchism. When the Soviet Russians partitioned Poland with Germany in 1939, the Roman Catholic church and all other churches east of Warsaw were wiped out. On the German side the Roman

Church was not stricken so suddenly and most of its sanctuaries are still open, but the Generalgouvernement under Dr. Frank has gone progressively about the destruction of the church by deliberately destroying the whole nation. Cardinal Hlond, Catholic Primate of Poland, has been reported as saying that over 700,000 Poles have perished since the Nazi occupation. Polish-Americans escaping through Berlin by the score last year confirmed in every detail the reign of terror that is going on behind the borders of that blacked-out area. Some effort has been made to "Germanize" the blond, blue-eyed Poles, but most of those who survive are destined by the Nazis to provide slave labor on the German-owned land. All property in western Poland has been ruthlessly confiscated—regardless of whether or not it was owned by Poles even before 1918—and thousands of colonists from Latvia, Bessarabia, the Italian Tyrol, and elsewhere have been settled there without their pastors or priests. The Nazi press had screamed at the persecution of the German Protestant church in Upper Silesia and Posen; now vengeance is being wreaked a hundredfold for the "martyrdom" of German pastors who, as has been indicated before, were not always innocent of political intrigue in the border areas. Ironically enough, nothing has been done to re-establish the German Church at the center of these reannexed communities; the Nazi purpose has already been served.

The only church which the Nazi liberators have taken any public pride in re-establishing is the Russian Church within the Soviet border, but the success of this bit of political strategy has been seriously penalized by the downright refusal of the Hitler regime to permit the German Church to have any share in reviving religion in the Ostland. Alfred Rosenberg who is Commissar for this huge area may be counted on to resist the introduction of any Christian influences under Nazi sponsorship, although the local congregations which are able struggle to their feet by themselves under a priest who has managed to survive successive purges will probably be tolerated for their value as political instruments. The present German government has always sub-

sidized one Orthodox congregation of White Russians and other Slavs in Berlin, and lately the Synod of the Orthodox Church in exile made Archbishop Seraphim of Berlin (actually a German converted to Orthodoxy) the first Metropolitan of Central Europe. This position parallels the office of the Nazi-elevated Metropolitan Polycarp of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and ostensibly brings the whole Russian Church in Europe under German control. Its connection with the Slovakian, Rumanian, and Bulgarian churches whose leaders have proved to be gratifyingly subservient to the New Order is emphasized.

The Metropolitan of Moscow, Sergius, has of course been trotted out to denounce the Ukrainian Polycarp who at Nazi instigation had eliminated all priests unsympathetic to the "New Order" and started at once to re-educate Russian youth according to the Hitlerian principles. Sergius cannot, however, be accused of doing nothing more than serving Soviet ends; like Niemoeller, he has suffered greatly to prevent the complete destruction of the Christian faith in Russia, and now his endurance—and his support of the war effort—seem to have been rewarded. In and around Russia more than anywhere else in Europe the church is being used as a football in the game of international power politics. The Nazis, it appears from the *Svenska Dagbladet*, even went so far last year as to transport large numbers of Russian war prisoners to the Berlin Orthodox Cathedral—which was built with Nazi money—for the Easter services. Nothing was said about providing chaplains to conduct services in the camps! Long articles about grateful peasants crowding into reopened churches appear in the Russian-language newspapers printed in Germany, but virtually nothing of all that is reproduced in the German press itself except to reassure tender-hearted Germans of the cultural mission of German troops.

The place of religion in Hitler's New European Order may be most accurately deduced from the experiments which have been undertaken in the guinea-pig districts which have

been selected as proving grounds for political, economic, and social theories. These areas are invariably on the border of the Old Reich where conditions have been most favorable for experimentation because of the Germanic foundation of community life which, since "alien" political superstructures have been swept away, presents an inviting *tabula rasa*. According to Nazi ethnology, northern and western Poland, the Sudetenland, Austria, Alsace, Luxembourg, and Eupen-Malmedy already fall in this category; other areas not yet acquired will come later. The religious experiments were carried out chiefly in Austria, Poland, and Alsace.

Austria provided the SS with a splendid opportunity to exceed the limits of mere ecclesiastical reform by perfecting a technique of expropriating the Catholic Church with the excuse that it had meddled in politics. In Alsace, on the other hand, where some of the pastors had meddled in politics to the vast advantage of the Third Reich, it was suddenly announced that ministerial salaries and pensions would be discontinued. I found this out when I made a quick trip into Strasbourg last November and located some of the people whom I knew when I was a student at the university a few years before.

The stiff-necked Alsatians had been accustomed in times past to being courted alternately by both France and Germany. The French, despite the charges made against them, had left the pre-1918 prerogatives of the local church largely intact, especially the fiscal system involving state support, although separation of church and state had been brought about in the rest of France in 1905. German preachers still continued to use the German language, or their Alsatian patois, yet they were chronically disgruntled with the French, and the theological faculty in the university was a hotbed of the "autonomist" movement which was clandestinely nourished by Nazi agents. It might have been thought, therefore, that the "New Order" would have been welcomed with open arms, but actually it came as a bitter disappointment to these people who anticipated receiving still more favors and privileges. They had not realized, like so many other

dupes of Nazi propaganda, that the only privilege a German now enjoys is to offer up his whole life to a deified State.

A delegation of Alsatian clergy hastened to Berlin and frantically protested at this repayment of their loyalty. They returned home with a promise that a portion of their salaries would continue to be paid for the present but they received no satisfaction as to their future status. Some of the young men who had delighted in harrying the French police with their secret meetings and Nazi pranks soon disappeared into Germany to avoid further participation in the ruthless exploitation of their fair and fertile province; but most of them merely crept away into the villages or bolted into France seeking escape from the Frankenstein they had helped to conjure up. I heard these stories in French from Alsatians who previously had refused to speak anything but German unless forced to do so. Strasbourg at the time of my visit, eighteen months after the occupation, was a skeleton town of skin and bones still living off its prewar stocks of merchandise piled on the counters of a few Nazi stores.

The picture of western Poland is far, far worse, not only generally speaking but with special reference to the church. Here Gauleiter Artur Greiser has not only dispossessed the Poles and broken the back of Polish Catholicism but he has subjected the remaining German Evangelical churches to a regimentation which separates them from all direct communication with the rest of Christendom and subordinates all their activities to his personal control. In 1941 he put eight points at the basis of all Christian church life.

1. Churches cease to exist under state law and become purely religious communities in the sense of societies.
2. All ties to groups outside of the Warthe district are cut, including legal, financial, or any other connections with churches in the Reich.
3. Adults alone may become members of these societies and only after written application. One cannot be born into the society but must declare adherence upon reaching maturity.
4. All cloisters and religious foundations are dissolved because



they are not in line with German morals and the German policy of population.

5. Confessional auxiliary groups such as youth organizations are disbanded.

6. The societies may possess no property of any kind.

7. Germans and Poles may no longer worship together. This is in accordance with the nationality principle.

8. Only clergymen from the Warthegau may preach. They must have another occupation or profession.

This is not the program imposed on one province by a single church-hating Nazi but unquestionably the approved scheme of the regime which sooner or later will introduce the same system of control into other areas and eventually throughout all Germany and, if possible, all Europe. Here is the New Order for religion in its purest form! I know from my contacts in Berlin that a long start has been made in carrying the program into effect, and churchmen know that it means the ultimate extinction of the church in the form in which Europe has known it for almost two thousand years.

Presupposing that the radical Nazis achieve their purpose of stamping out Christianity in the conquered territories, the presence of virile Protestant churches in such unassimilated countries as Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland, perhaps Denmark, and the firm grip of the Catholic Church on such Axis allies as Spain, Italy, and Hungary pose questions which not even the Berchtesgaden oracle can answer yet. If Hitler succeeds in holding Europe, Christendom stands to lose its oldest churches just as it once lost the very birthplace of its founder.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *What Will the End Be?*

THE fact that the German Army marches as one man and the German people speak with only one raucous voice, namely, Adolf Hitler's, is sometimes taken to mean that the Nazi nation—despite all evidence of internal resistance and discontent—must still be united behind the Fuehrer and enthusiastic about the war. As a matter of fact, Hitler reached the peak of his popularity at the time of the Austrian *Anschluss* in 1938 and his personal prestige, in spite of the incredible military victories since 1939, has been declining ever since. Disregarding the 99 per cent plebiscites and the "endless ovations" which the Leader receives from an obedient nation, there was no real unity and harmony of spirit in the Third Reich at the end of the third year of war.

It is true that the German people feel a justifiable admiration for the military performances of their men in uniform, because these victories, like all of Hitler's "triumphs," served to restore the confidence which had been shattered by defeat in the last war and by a sense of frustration in the consequent era of national impotence. In the first place, nobody likes to be beaten; everybody likes to see the home team win, even if you happen to dislike the local manager or coach. Victory is associated with the valor of the home town boys, defeat with poor generalship. People of a victorious nation are in a poor position to appreciate how depressing, how demoralizing a national defeat can be. Secondly, war is more than a competitive sport. Believing firmly in the righteousness of their cause, it is natural for the triumphant people to think that the losers ought to take their medicine without grumbling, then turn over a new leaf and behave themselves. They forget that the vanquished may have been convinced of the justice of their case too and that for them a defeat

shakes the moral foundations of the universe. They also forget that those of the losers who did not espouse the national cause are bound to resent being lumped together with the war party without discrimination when the peace plans are made.

The double beating that the Germans took in the last war and in the sort of peace that followed it have made most of them very cynical about the comparative advantages of victory and defeat. Of course, victory is preferable to defeat, and a favorable war is better than an unfavorable peace! Who wouldn't think so? The spoils of the earlier campaigns constituted an additional proof of the blessings of victory: servant girls in Berlin wore silver fox furs from Norway and sheer silk stockings from Paris. In fact, a lot of younger Germans had begun to think that the horrors of war as painted by those who remembered 1917 were extravagantly exaggerated. War, after all, wasn't any bloodier than street-fights with Communists or hungrier than the butterless days of peacetime. It took the Russian campaign to bring home to these success-drunk Nazis the cold reality of war. Even then, there were not many of them. Most Germans simply took the spoils of war because, if they didn't, someone else would. A dark inkling of the bitter times to come hovered in the background of their minds. Once beaten, they have been cautious about depositing too much faith in the victories of this war because they remember being told that the last war was virtually won almost up until the day that it was lost. Quite apart from the question of just deserts, it is unpleasant to contemplate the possible effect that another defeat would have upon a nation of eighty million people who, after all, must be reckoned with in the reconstruction of Europe. The future of the continent depends in a very large measure on the extent to which Nazi Germany can be transformed into a useful member of the international order. It is natural—though scarcely Christian—for Nazi-ridden nations to want vengeance, yet it is doubtful whether anything except a short-lived animal satisfaction can be gained by exacting full retribution for Nazi crimes from a prostrate

nation. Surely it must be evident from the experiences of the last war how small an advantage is to be derived from letting the responsible government get off scot free, while the penalty is exacted from people who can not escape and are effectively prevented from demonstrating any good will in building a sound Republic by the short-sightedness of certain so-called peace provisions.

By this time Hitler has amply demonstrated that he knows far less than Geneva about the way peace is made and kept (take the Rumanian-Hungarian boundary settlement or the creation of puppet states like Croatia and Slovakia, for instance!) but Goebbels knows how to terrorize the people with visions of defeat. Most Germans already are haunted by the havoc that has been created in the old European "order," unsatisfactory as it was, and they dread the uncertain future because of the unquenchable fires of hatred that have been kindled throughout the world by their Nazi battalions. Very significant, I thought, was the observation of a German returning from America by way of Japan and Korea who said about the latter country, "You don't know what a relief it was to see an oppressed nation which was not being oppressed by your own people!" You will say that it is not enough to express one's regrets with a promise not to repeat the transgression, and that the Germans must now be taught a lesson which they will never forget; but I say that there are only two ways to forestall an eventual revival of Hitlerism in Germany: first, by annihilating the entire nation or, secondly, by applying a truly Christian policy of forgiveness. The first alternative is physically impossible, even as it is morally unthinkable. The second alternative implies the extension of a fairly widespread standard of individual behavior from daily personal relationships to the international social order.

I make no apology for the utter idealism of my viewpoint expressed in this concluding chapter but merely take advantage of an excellent opportunity to express a few convictions which have grown out of my observations in all of Europe over a period of eight crowded years. I am trying to be practical. Nobody got anything out of the futile Treaty

of Versailles which was never actually carried into full effect, and no one would get anything out of writing an even harsher treaty this time—just as the Nazis themselves will never harvest anything but hatred from the conditions of peace which they have imposed on occupied Europe. It might provide a kind of satisfaction to establish quasi-permanent garrisons in all German cities “just as a reminder,” but that satisfaction would be about as durable as the satisfaction an enemy would get from garrisoning American cities. The entire population of the United States, regardless of political and religious differences, would unite to expel the invader. International difficulties could be adjusted very easily if nations could be punished like naughty children, but the most elementary psychology teaches that full-grown adults cannot be treated as children even though their irresponsible, or vicious, conduct seems to warrant it. I refer again to my thesis that the German people are politically immature.

Sometimes it helps to put oneself in the other fellow's shoes! The amazing thing about this war and one of the most hopeful things for peace is that there is so little hatred involved in the fighting. The Germans despite Goebbels' rantings went to war with the impersonal efficiency of a well-oiled machine, and the United Nations went in with the preliminary confusion of a business enterprise hastily but deliberately revolutionizing itself to meet deadly competition. You will think perhaps that there is something doubly reprehensible about fighting without hatred and that there is all the more reason for annihilating that well-oiled machine. Certainly, the machine must be junked, but cannot the universal detestation of war be interpreted as a sign that the abortive League of Nations and its companionate ideology a less dismal failure than has been supposed? The rise of Hitler was due not so much to a spontaneous revulsion against peace itself as to a renunciation of the kind of peace which had issued from the war. Germans know now that, whatever Hitler will give them, it will not be peace and most of them—excepting the youth—regret

deep down in their hearts that they ever helped to bring him to power. Only a minority concur in the radical Fascist philosophy that "life is war" (although all Europeans believe that life is struggle), and by the time this war is much older they will no doubt have become very dubious about their swashbuckling heroics.

The cold weight of a great fear rests at the bottom of most German hearts and it is upon this feeling that Dr. Goebbels has deliberately played in order to keep the nation fighting. This accounts in large measure for the profound apathy which characterizes the German man-in-the-street who, normally, ought to be swept off his feet by the resounding victories which have been achieved. It is noteworthy that there have not been any great celebrations in the streets of Berlin, not even after the fall of France. There was, however, an audible sigh of relief when it was felt that now some kind of an armistice could be arranged. No one who knew Hitler believed that the armistice would be of long duration, but it was hoped that maybe some miracle would happen which would effectively prevent further war. Germans were tired of war before it began. They have felt ever since the Sudeten crisis that this was Hitler's war: if he could win a quick one, well and good; if not, so much the worse for him and them.

The quick victory faded from sight as more and more conquests became necessary. With the Russian campaign the last hopes of a swift and relatively inexpensive military decision were surrendered. The long war that most Germans dreaded was upon them and therefore not even the entry of the United States into the conflict could arouse more than a passing flicker of interest in their expressionless, pudgy faces. They have been told for two years that America's aid would come too late. Not many Germans, familiar as they are with the prodigious energies of America, believed that, but it may be true that Hitler won a tactical victory by declaring war on the United States instead of waiting for the United States to declare war on him. Fearful Germans were bound to be impressed by this display of bravado and

Americans, on the other hand, were thrown psychologically on the defensive where, for that matter, we remained until the North African campaign. From my observations made on both sides of the battle lines I can only report that the common people of the Western world will never again fight enthusiastically merely to win a war, but that they might fight to win a peace if they believe that the peace is worth fighting for. Up till now none of the people is enthusiastic about this war because no government—Axis or Allied—seems to have inspired them with attractive plans for a durable peace.

Another reason for German apathy toward victory or defeat is that no matter whether Hitler wins or not, the nation stands to suffer the results of war for many years to come. If they should win, there will be no amelioration of the position of the little fellow owing to the Fuehrer's overweening ambition to weld the Volk into a regimented unit which would write world history for the next thousand years. The average German does not want to run the world, but it would be gratifying to him if the world were run in a sort of German—not Nazi—way. Such thoughts, on close examination, are no more imperialistic than American desires to see the world run in an American way. The German, as has often been said, is normally content with his *Stammtisch*, his glass of beer, and his circumscribed lifework. It remains to be seen what effect the continued residence of German soldiers in occupied countries will have upon the national psychology. Most of them get homesick, others begin to get an appetite for foreign ways of living, others resent the increasing hardships of family life on the home front. Many soldiers returning from occupied lands are already asking, "What is the use of 'liberating' one European nation after the other if we have to come back to a homeland without liberty?" They, too, have a great longing for a peace which will extricate them from the sucking quicksands of European occupation, and for the miracle of a peace, if possible, without victory or defeat.

Does this mean that the Germans are already ripe to receive overtures of a negotiated peace? No, it does not. A real peace can never be negotiated with Hitler and his hold upon the people is still too strong for any immediate hope of reaching them directly. War is essentially futile but this war must go on until it has achieved the end to which no other social instrument which has as yet been devised can bring us, namely, the elimination of international outlaws. The fact that the rest of the world is also in a moral sense accessory to the criminal career of the Axis governments ought to strengthen rather than weaken the war effort with a view to bringing the war to a full stop as soon as possible and in order that adequate precautions may be taken at once to prevent a recurrence, not only in a few seemingly chronic areas but everywhere. It is significant that neither the Germans nor the Italians, who were enemies in the last war, have any confidence in the honest intentions of other European—and, for that matter, American—nations to make the international readjustments which become necessary from time to time. As I said before, the skeptical apathy of common people everywhere regarding the war effort is largely owing to their inability to visualize a measurably practical scheme of international rehabilitation.

In brief, the cautious Germans feel that they have indisputable grounds for hesitating to listen to anti-Nazi propaganda which contains no credible guarantees that they will not be worse off for having obeyed. My words are carefully weighed when I say that the home front is not only split but splintered. The pieces, however, are held together by fear of the future and by iron bands of discipline which are applied from the outside by the Gestapo rather than from the inside by the German's natural sense of obedience or loyalty. This enforced discipline, I hasten to add, may successfully corset the disintegrating nation for many months to come. The Nazis know what they are up against and they cherish the hope that, in case of an indefinitely prolonged war and a military stalemate, the local home front will not collapse before the civilians of the



United Nations start using their much-vaunted freedom of speech to demand capitulation or compromise. To the Nazi type of mind the strength of democratic methods will always appear deceptively weak.

Hitler has always said that his predecessor, the Kaiser, lost the first World War because he permitted a shattered and demoralized home front to stab his victorious army in the back. There is more than a suspicion that this facile explanation does not fully account for the defeat of 1918, but despite the fact that the entry of the United States into that war is sometimes given partial credit for German defeat, Hitler appears to be satisfied with the former explanation and he is prepared to go to any lengths to prevent his civilians from breaking or even bending under the cumulative weight of World War II. That is why Germans are forbidden under penalty of death to listen to foreign broadcasts and repeat what they have heard to friends or neighbors. They are, as far as possible, hermetically protected from any unfavorable reports regarding the status of their own cause. Americans returning from Germany since our entry into the war were flabbergasted—and proud—to see the enemy military communiqués being printed in the metropolitan newspapers and publicity given to the hours of Axis short-wave broadcasts. Thus, we are given some added indication of our own reverses but, so far as the German press is concerned, not a single setback has occurred since Hitler first came to power, let alone since the outbreak of war. Even the Germans who sourly discredit every major Axis victory do not know the full price which their own nation has already paid and will have to pay for this Hitlerian spree. They too may conclude by blaming everybody but themselves. It ought not to go unnoticed that unless measures are taken after the war to make them thoroughly familiar with the whole ugly truth, there is some danger that they will continue to be excellent customers for the next high-pressure salesman who comes along to convince them that they are merely the innocent victims of some vile Jewish plot, especially if they again become a pariah among nations.

The religious aspect of this deplorable state of mind into which Hitler has maneuvered the nation is extremely important not only from the standpoint of Allied war psychology but from the viewpoint of gaining a just and durable peace. Inasmuch as the German Jews can hardly be saddled with guilt for the next crack-up of the civilian front, the most logical candidate for the unenviable position of stabber-in-the-back is the Christian church. One hesitates to imagine the fate that might overtake the church in the near or distant future if practical steps are not taken now to secure its precarious footing in the New Europe. Christianity, as an organized religion in Europe, contains many weaknesses and faults which this book has not tried to hide, but there is no doubt that it alone can supply the moral fiber for a reconstructed continent whose people are no more willing to accept Communism than National Socialism as a substitute for religion.

The soul will be about the only thing left to the European after this war is over. Before the end comes in sight the old standards of life as well as the unstable boundaries of former states will probably have been razed to the ground, indeed perhaps effaced from living memory. A new world compounded of the better features, one may hope, of all conflicting systems will begin to arise and with it a new church will have to grow if Christianity is to survive—a united, communal church which will draw its strength from the active faith of the common people and expend its energy not in national or denominational projects so much as in a consciously world-wide work.

German, as well as all other European churchmen, have seen and understood to a very great extent the imminent need for a complete reorientation of Christian faith and life in this final struggle for the very soul of the people. Indeed certain leading thinkers have for some decades been aware that a new period of crisis in the spiritual history of Western civilization was rapidly approaching; but it may be said, I think, that not one of them has been able to divorce himself so completely from traditional forms as to visualize that

future correctly. Many of them, on the contrary, sought refuge in a precipitate return to the past or flight into other-worldly mysticism. These two elements are inextricably mixed at the present time in every one of the diverse tendencies which Germany today exhibits, whether among the Confessionals, the Nazi Christians, or the "God-believers." In fact it was this widespread spiritual confusion which gave rise to National Socialism as well as to the recent ecumenical movements within the church as an answer to Communism. For four hundred years Christianity has lived on the impulse of the Reformation and the Renaissance. The energy generated by these great revolutions has expended itself but the keynote of a new era has not yet been struck. Hitler thinks he has sounded it in his theories of race and nation, blood and soil, but those notes are the death rattle of the nationalistic epoch which is dying and promises to become as extinct as the dodo. The veneer of socialism will not save it. The best that can be said for Fascism is that Germany and Italy are at last graduating from an adolescent monarchical cast of mind into the "leadership" idea which is nothing more or less than an inverted and twisted form of the democratic ideal that "every boy can become president."

German pastors and people who seized upon National Socialism as an instrument for revitalizing the church have suffered a great disillusionment because the Nazi movement has definitely failed them both on the score of nationalism and on that of socialism. The nationalism of the Nazis is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Germanism in the old sense of the word and does not really give expression to the whole German spirit; to a part of it, yes, but by no means to the larger part. The socialism partakes of nothing uniquely Nazi except for the totalitarian exploitation of great projects for purely political purposes and for the protection of capitalism which, as in Russia, is rapidly becoming state capitalism. The combination of these two "isms" in the party name was a fairly clever, but obvious, subterfuge wherewith to tide over a period of social, economic, political, and spiritual

disintegration; but it could never become the motive force in the building of a new world, even though the virile German nation took a new lease on life under its dynamism.

The German who was trying to be honest with himself saw, as I have pointed out, that there were things in National Socialism which were good and things in Christianity which were bad. In the former instance it was Nazi theory which looked good and in the latter case it was Christian practice which looked bad; unfortunately, this distinction did not appear clearly until Nazi practice had begun to reveal itself, thus forcing a re-examination of Christian principles. Ironically, it was the final involvement in the disastrous Russian campaign which brought this error in judgment to light, as was evidenced by the fact that Nazi paganism took an unambiguously hostile stand against the Christian faith just when the crusade against atheistic Bolshevism began. Howard Smith's splendid description of the impact of the Russian campaign on Germany—in *The Last Train from Berlin*—neglects to deal with this most important aspect of that crucial turning point in the war. The solemnity of death was felt for the first time. Garish Nazi funeral services did not succeed in restoring glamour to the Grim Reaper.

It is a stern fact that Nazi ideology, despite its superior attraction for certain classes of people, is not stronger than Communist ideology. The enormous strength of the New Germany actually rests on the ruthless regimentation of a highly industrialized country which already possessed a docile and competent civil service. After probing beneath the surface of Hitlerism, a lot of Germans found it difficult to distinguish between the practical results of the two ideologies. "What," they used to ask, "is the difference between Russia and Germany?" The answer was, "In Russia it's colder." After the Russian pact was made in August, 1939, and the first severe war winter set in, Germans ruefully consoled themselves with the Siberian weather by saying, "Yes, it"—meaning imported Russian weather—"is permitted now!"

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In the Russians the Nazis have met an adversary tougher than themselves. Incredible stories soon trickled into Berlin from the first days of the Eastern campaign and they were difficult to believe because most of us would hardly have been surprised if Moscow had fallen in the first few weeks. We suspected that the German war machine would be mired down in the vast reaches of an indigestible country, but it seemed vain to hope that the Russians could maintain a fully organized resistance for any length of time. They were, of course, driven back fast, but the incredible tales continued to come home with German soldiers who were on leave or wounded. The Reds, we were told, would let the first wave of a mechanized attack pass over them in order to rise up behind the Nazi units, cut the poorly protected communications, then harry and even destroy both the advance forces and the following reinforcements. They played dead in order to "resurrect" themselves within the enemy lines, until the swiftly moving Germans had to slow their advance down to a walk in order to make sure that every single "corpse" along the way was really dead. These Russians offered themselves for surrender with upraised arms only to hurl concealed hand grenades under the tanks toward which they came. They apparently were ordered not to bother taking prisoner the SS men whose special insignia they knew. Worst of all, as has been said before, the Germans no longer had the certain feeling that they themselves would be treated according to the standards governing care of war prisoners, because the USSR had never signed the Geneva Convention and not a single reassuring word issued from Russian prison camps.

I am in no position to say whether or not it was a "religious faith" in Communism which inspired this heroic resistance, but I can say that the Nazis, for all their bravery, had nothing to match such utter fanaticism. The thing that seems to be lacking is a genuine belief in a positive cause which will justify their persistent aggression. Psychologically, they imagine that they are fighting a defensive war. This notion, which was adopted straight out of the last war,

has been hammered into them so long by the Propaganda Ministry that the shift of emphasis to the building of a New European Order carries no conviction to the German consciousness which functions best in the midst of a persecution complex. Moreover, the pretense of saving and "liberating" Europe does not accord well with the long years of preparation that it took to build up an army and the long months that it took to make ready for the "last-minute rescue" of nations like Norway and Denmark from English invasion. The most revealing insight into Hitler's fundamental hypocrisy in regard to the present war is to be found in a comparison of Britain's improvised and awkward war efforts and Germany's improvised and equally awkward peace efforts. Therein lies a touchstone by which to test all arguments with reference to altruistic intentions.

Nazism has been adept at criticizing and destroying the old European order but its failure to build a new order is patent. The uneasy status of Hungarian-Rumanian relations, for example, provides a particularly glaring illustration of Hitler's inability even to redraw the map of the continent with more skill than previous boundary umpires have shown. In short, National Socialism has proved to be even less successful abroad than at home because it can never understand alien mentalities and is totally self-centered. In spite of geopolitics, it never started out to be an international movement and the strains and stresses caused by a shift of fundamental policy in these latter years have been enormous. Internationalism had been taboo since 1933 because, according to Hitler, it was the root of all evil. That he still thinks so is evident from the way occupied countries have been sacrificed to the Reich's economic and political needs. The most positive and constructive idea among Nazis as to the ultimate reconstitution of Europe was to be found in the concept of a "Nationalist International," which amounts to a league of Fascist nations, but not even this notion has been popularized for future use. A young German, Dr. Hans K. E. L. Keller, struggled for years to maintain an organization, including non-German



members, with this idea as a basis, and he may have had some financial support from the regime, but the movement never came alive and finally Keller went into the Propaganda Ministry. Nobody really believes that a new Axis of nations under the domination of Germany and Italy would be any more effective than the old League under the control of Great Britain and France.

Such considerations inevitably drive peace yearners and peace planners to pass over Hitlerism as an answer to Europe's problems. It seems clear that the two most powerful factors which can still rally Europeans of all nations to an international standard are Christianity and Communism. Both are battle-scarred in their struggle with Fascism and with one another, and both of them habitually look for communicating doors in national boundary walls rather than at the solid masonry. It remains to be seen which of these two forces will come out of the war in a better condition to make the final peace, because, even though they entered into a temporary truce with each other, it is unlikely that the truce could or would be continued after the common enemy has been destroyed.

Without attempting to evaluate the potential strength of Communism as a way of life, it may be said that the germ of Christianity in Europe will prove to be almost indestructible. The German Church, however—indeed all European Christian organizations—are in imminent danger of being destroyed. If a church issues from the war, it will be like a man who has undergone a long and wasting illness, that is, it will be institutionally weaker but the fight with death will have made it spiritually stronger than it has been for a long time. In the Old Testament sense, a "remnant" will be left to carry on the torch of a living faith. Many traditions will be overthrown in the process.

The nature and extent of this revolution will depend upon the Christian youth who have their eyes on planning the future rather than upon restoring the past or preserving the fragments of the present. The youth of Germany,

for example, has not been entirely Nazified and the chances that it ever will be are not at all good. The very questions that Nazism has directed at Christianity will inevitably reflect upon itself because no new generation has ever been willing to accept docilely all the value-judgments of its predecessors. Besides, many youngsters are already impregnated with a live Christian faith which can never be extinguished. This is not wishful thinking on my part.

I have already told the story of my visit to a clandestine meeting of young Christians in a Berlin air-raid cellar. Groups like this are being aided by their parents and friends, some of whom occupy positions of authority. One of the finest women I have ever known was Frau Kausler whose title was Magistratschulrätin, a very high one. She was in charge of the German end of the international pupil exchange, whose purpose was to give high school boys and girls a chance not only to visit foreign countries but to live in the homes and attend the schools of the country they chose to visit.

The Nazis supported this scheme when Hitler came to power because they thought they could train these pupils to be young propaganda agents for the Third Reich, but Frau Kausler had another idea. She wanted those boys and girls to realize that Germany was not the only country in the world and that other nations had very good qualities by which young Germans might profit. She was especially interested in sending as many children as possible to England and to the United States.

Shortly after I arrived in Berlin it was proposed by Frau Kausler that the pupils who were going to America should attend one service at the American Church just before they sailed. I was skeptical at first, but my policy was to try almost everything at least once in order to leave no stone unturned in trying to make real friends for our country.

The next year we arranged to have the high school pupils of our American School in Berlin present. I had absolute confidence that Frau Kausler and Gregor Ziemer, the headmaster of the school, were as eager as I to do everything in

our power to show the young people what kind of friends Americans can be. The service was attended by one hundred exchange pupils, instead of thirty as in the previous year, and by forty boys and girls from the American high school.

It was a grand sight to see the two groups marching into our church instead of into the theater across the street. It was better yet to hear them singing "Onward Christian Soldiers," but best of all was to see Harro Miller, son of our commercial attaché, Douglas Miller, shake hands with a boy from Frau Kausler's group as a symbol of friendship after Harro had made a short speech of welcome to the German pupils and the German boy had responded.

From hearts bursting with gratitude, the German parents and teachers who were present said to me, "Oh, that is just what our boys and girls need so badly. They need to know that the people of other nations can be friendly. They need to see what Christian fellowship really means. That is why we are sending them to America. We want them to get a breath of fresh air." And so those boys and girls, the older ones, often came back to the services of our American Church after their return from the States. They started a club where they spoke only English and they invited our young people to their meetings.

Then came the year of the annexation of Austria. Our farewell service for the new group of pupils came just one week after Hitler returned to Berlin in triumph. Again I spoke as no German pastor, I suppose, would dare to speak to them and my text was taken—prophetically, it turned out—from the story of the third temptation in the wilderness when Jesus was shown all the kingdoms of the world and told that they were his for the asking.

That year—1938—the exchange pupils were not well received in some places over here. There were a few rabid Hitler Youth among them and there were some Americans who vented their anger with Hitler on those boys and girls. Frau Kausler was heartbroken. The following year owing to the unsettled state of affairs no pupils were sent out of continental Europe and then came the war. Frau Kausler

was thrown out of her job in disgrace and a few months later she died—of a broken heart. That is why I can honor her name now.

Maybe you think that she didn't do much to prevent the Nazification of German youth and maybe you think that those services in the American Church were a futile gesture; but I feel sure that the seeds of Hitler's eventual destruction have been planted by heroines like Frau Kausler and by the American women who for two months were mothers to those indoctrinated children who had been taught to look on the seamy side of our country but who returned to Germany—many of them—with only one wish: to come back as soon as they could.

When I think of solid columns of Hitler Youth marching down German streets, when I think of German officials all wearing their party buttons, I remember that they include those boys in the air-raid cellar, and men and women like Frau Kausler. They would probably be called traitors by the Nazis, but they believe that they are loyal to the real Germany and to a larger ideal than Hitler has been able to provide. The course they have chosen is not easy, nor even encouraging. So far the resistance they have offered has been steadily beaten down and all their counter-attacks have been outflanked. One of the last visitors I had before leaving Berlin a year ago was a German pastor who had joined in the Confessional struggle with gusto and carried a tremendous burden of work and responsibility for many years. Yet, when he heard of the recent wholesale massacres of Jews in Poland and Russia, he said, "I can't stand it any longer. No matter how the war ends or when it ends, I am going to leave for America. My wife and I talked it over the other night. I'm not young any more but I can never be happy again here in my own country."

Thus, the portrait of the spirit of Germany today is Rembrandtesque in its mixture of light and dark. The chiaroscuro produces a predominantly gloomy effect, despite the lightning flashes of hope between the rolling thun-

derclouds of despair. Only one more word remains to be spoken in description of this canvas. The hint of it is already contained in the dispirited statement of the pastor to whom I referred. The Christian eyes of Europe are turned toward the United States, specifically toward Christian America. It is both heartening and humbling to think of the tremendous confidence they place in the benevolent goodwill which America, despite all the derogatory abuse of the Propaganda Ministry, still symbolizes. If British and American Christianity should fail them in the peace following an eventual defeat, the backbone of the courage of their national churches would snap and, as has been indicated before, the Christian institutions of Europe and America might perhaps be utterly destroyed.

It is an interesting and maddening commentary upon German resignation to Hitler's control that the longing for liberation from the Nazi yoke so often turns its yearning glances beyond the borders of the continent with apparently little regard for, or realization of, the basic principle that true freedom has its source in the inner man. The spiritual reality of this principle was taught by Martin Luther and it has been grasped by the leaders of the Confessional church, but it has always been divorced from political considerations. Strangely enough, it was left to Hitler to make the whole nation conscious of its strength and of the individual's personal responsibility. Of course, the full effect of this development has not been felt. When it really erupts, Hitler himself will be swept away. But his grip must be loosened first and Himmler is waiting for that day in order to seize power for himself.

The Nazis know that the soul of the German people has eluded them but, as long as an iron grip is maintained upon their body, the soul must perish or grow stronger. That is why the reconstruction of Europe after this war will not be merely a matter of economic rehabilitation, nor even of re-education in an academic sense, but of spiritual reformation and revival.

## APPENDIX I

### *30-Point Church Plan*

1. The National Reich Church of Germany categorically claims the exclusive right and the exclusive power to control all churches within the borders of the Reich; it declares these to be national churches of the German Reich.

2. The German people must not serve the National Church. The National Church is absolutely and exclusively in the service of but one doctrine: race and nation.

3. The field of activity of the National Church will expand to the limits of Germany's territorial and colonial possessions.

4. The National Church does not force any German to seek membership therein. The National Church will do everything within its power to secure the adherence of every German soul. Other churches or similar communities and unions particularly such as are under international control or management cannot and shall not be tolerated in Germany.

5. The National Church is determined to exterminate irrevocably and by every means the strange and foreign Christian faiths imported into Germany in the ill-omened year 800.

6. The existing churches may not be architecturally altered, as they represent the property of the German nation, German culture, and to a certain extent the historical development of the nation. As property of the German nation they are not only to be valued but to be preserved.

7. The National Church has no scribes, pastors, chaplains, or priests, but National Reich orators are to speak in them.

8. The National Church services are held only in the evening and not in the morning. These services are to take place on Saturdays with solemn illumination.

9. In the National Church German men and women, German youths and girls will acknowledge God and His eternal works.

10. The National Church irrevocably strives for complete union with the state. It must obey the state as one of its servants.

As such it demands that all landed possessions of all churches and religious denominations be handed over to the state. It forbids that in the future churches should secure ownership of even the smallest piece of German soil or that such be ever given back to them. Not the churches conquer and cultivate land and soil but exclusively the German nation, the German state.

11. National Church orators may never be those who today emphasize with all tricks and cunning, verbally and in writing, the necessity of maintaining and teaching Christianity in Germany. They not only lie to themselves but also to the German nation, goaded by their love of the positions they hold and the sweet bread they eat.

12. National Church orators hold office as government officials under civil service rules.

13. The National Church demands immediate cessation of the publishing and dissemination of the Bible in Germany as well as the publication of Sunday papers, pamphlets, publications, and books of religious nature.

14. The National Church declares that to it, and therefore to the German nation, it has been decided that Fuehrer's *Mein Kampf* is the greatest of all documents. It is conscious that this book not only contains the greatest, but that it embodies the purest and truest ethics for the present and future life of our nation.

15. The National Church has to take severe measures in order to prevent the Bible and other Christian publications being imported into Germany.

16. The National Church has made it its sacred duty to use all its energy to popularize the coeternal *Mein Kampf* and to let every German live and complete his life according to this book.

17. The National Church demands that further editions of this book, whatever form they may take, be in content and pagination exactly similar to the present popular edition.

18. The National Church will clear away from its altars all crucifixes, Bibles, and pictures of Saints.

19. On the altars there must be nothing but *Mein Kampf* (to the German nation and therefore to God the most sacred book) and to the left of the altar a sword.

20. The National Church speakers must during National

Church services propound this book to the congregation to the best of their knowledge and ability.

21. The National Church does not acknowledge forgiveness of sins. It represents the standpoint which it will always proclaim that a sin once committed will be ruthlessly punished by the honorable and indestructible laws of nature and punishment will follow during the sinner's lifetime.

22. The National Church repudiates the christening of German children particularly the christening with water and the Holy Ghost.

23. The parents of a child must take only the German oath before the altar. This oath is worded as follows: The man: "In the name of God I take this Holy oath that I (name), the father of this child, and my wife, are of proven Aryan descent. As a father I agree to bring up this child in the German spirit and as a member of the German race."

The woman: "In the name of God I take this Holy oath that I (name) bore my husband a child and that my husband is the father of this child and that I its mother am of proven Aryan descent. As a mother I swear to bring up this child in the German spirit and as a member of the German race." The German diploma can be issued only to newly born children on the strength of the German oath.

24. The National Church abolishes confirmation and religious education as well as the communion, the religious preparation for the communion. The educational institutions are and remain the family, the schools, the Hitler Youth, and the Union of German Girls.

25. In order that school graduation of our German youth be given an especially solemn character, all National Churches must put themselves at the disposal of German youth. The Hitler Youth day will be on the Friday before Easter. On this day only the leaders of these organizations may speak.

26. The marriage ceremony of German men and women will consist of taking an oath of faithfulness and placing the right hand on the sword. There will not be any unworthy kneeling in National Church ceremonies.

27. The National Church declares the tenth day before Whitsunday to be the national holiday of the German family.



28. The National Church rejects the customary day of prayer and atonement. It demands that this be transferred to the holiday commemorating the laying of the foundation stone of the National Church.

29. The National Church will not tolerate the establishment of any new clerical religious insignia.

30. On the day of its foundation the Christian cross must be removed from all churches, cathedrals, and chapels within the Reich and its colonies, and it must be superseded by the only unconquerable symbol of the Hakenkreuz (swastika).

## APPENDIX II

### *German Catholic Pastoral Letter of March 22, 1942*

Dear Diocesans:

For years a war has raged in our fatherland against Christianity and Church, and has never been conducted with such bitterness. Repeatedly the German bishops have asked the Reich government to discontinue this fatal struggle; but, unfortunately, our appeals and endeavors have been without success.

Even in wartime, when solidarity has always been a matter of course, the fight continues; nay, increases in sharpness and bitterness and lies like a tremendous incubus on the German people, of whom at the last census 95 per cent—in Bavaria even 98 per cent—have professed to be Christians.

Therefore, the German bishops have considered it their duty toward Church and people to put an end to this internal war by a public declaration and an effective order. As we know that the faithful expect their bishops to do everything to protect belief and conscience, to re-establish the peace of religion and Church, and to ease their souls from severe pressure, we feel obliged to make public the most important points of our memoir (to the Reich government).

### I

In the Concordat of July 20, 1933, the Reich government granted the Catholic Church State protection for the free development of its functions. Actually, these grants have not been kept. Christianity and the Catholic Church have been denied State protection and are being fought and fettered through measures and organs of party and State.

1. Promised and pledged was "the liberty of creed and worship of the Catholic religion." In truth, pressure is frequently used on those who depend on State or party positions to force them to conceal or deny their Catholic religion or to compel them to abandon the Church. Through numerous ordinances and laws, open worship of the Catholic religion has been restricted to such

a degree that it has disappeared almost entirely from public life. It appears as if the sign of Christ, which in the year 312 was gloriously carried from the catacombs, is to be driven back to the catacombs.

Even worship within the houses of God is frequently restricted and oppressed. Quite a number of places of worship, especially in the Ostmark, in the newly conquered territories, but also in the old Reich, have been closed by force and even used for profane purposes. Services in rented rooms have been prohibited despite urgent necessities. Purchases of lots for the construction of new churches is being rendered impossible.

From time to time religious instruction for children and juveniles has been prohibited even in church-owned premises and has been punished. Religious care in hospitals has been most severely restricted through new laws.

2. Catholic parents and the Catholic Church have the natural and divine right to educate their children religiously according to the principles of the Christian faith and ethical law and in conformity with their own consciences. Through concordats, the influence of the Christian churches on school and education has been expressly granted.

Actually, however, the rights of parents and Church are being more and more restricted and have become ineffective. Juveniles in State youth organizations, in hostels and labor camps, often even in schools and country homes for evacuated children, are being influenced in an anti-Christian manner and kept away from religious services and celebrations. In the new State institutions (such as teachers' training schools, all-political educational homes, etc.) any Christian and religious influence is absolutely impossible.

3. The Catholic Church and its priests have the right and the duty to pronounce and defend, freely and unrestricted, orally and in writing, the creeds and doctrines of the Christian religion. The clergy, by agreement, has been granted State protection for the execution of its duties.

In reality, Catholic priests are watched constantly and suspiciously in their teaching and pastoral duties; priests, without proof of any guilt, are banned from their dioceses and homes, even deprived of their freedom and punished for having fulfilled their priestly duties truthfully and scrupulously.

It is unbearable that clergymen are being punished with expulsion from the country or internment in a concentration camp without court procedure and any contact with the clergy, when approach to the bishopric could have resulted in the explanation of misunderstandings or the prevention of mistakes.

The holding of religious services and exercises is made almost impossible; the religious press has been destroyed almost entirely; and reprinting of religious books, even catechisms, school Bibles, and diocesan prayer books is not permitted, while anti-Christian writings may be printed and distributed in mass circulation.

4. It is consented upon and granted by agreement: "Orders and religious societies are not subjected by the State to any specific restriction regarding their pastoral, educational, medical, and relief work, conduct of their affairs, and administration of their estates."

In fact, the Catholic orders have been expelled from schools almost entirely and are being curtailed in their other activities on an ever-increasing scale. A large part of their property and their institutions have been taken away from them and many are destined to perish because of the law prohibiting able-bodied men to work for them. Consequently, the German people will be in future without the pastoral services of the priests of the orders and without the sacrificing services of their nuns.

5. It has been promised and granted: "Within the limitations of the law, the clergy has the sole right to erect, conduct, and administer the seminaries for priests as well as church refectories."

In truth, not only the church refectories for students have been largely destroyed or taken from the administration of the church authorities but even seminaries for priests have been confiscated and deprived of their clerical status. This is in conformity with the purpose of those who wish to deprive the Catholic priesthood of successors.

## II

We emphasize that before the authorities we not only stand up for religious and clerical rights but likewise for the human rights bestowed by God on mankind. Every honest human being is interested in the respect and preservation of these rights; without them the entire Western culture must break down.

1. Every man has the natural right for personal freedom

within the boundaries designated by obedience to God, consideration of his fellow man, and the common good and the just laws of the civil authorities.

We German bishops protest against every disregard of personal freedom. We demand juridical proof of all sentences and release of all fellow citizens who have been deprived of their liberty without proof of an act punishable with imprisonment.

2. Every man has the natural right to life and the goods essential for living. The living God, the Creator of all life, is sole master over life and death.

With deep horror Christian Germans have learned that, by order of the State authorities, numerous insane persons, entrusted to asylums and institutions, were destroyed as so-called "unproductive citizens." At present a large-scale campaign is being made for the killing of incurables through a film recommended by the authorities and designed to calm the conscience through appeals to pity.

We German bishops shall not cease to protest against the killing of innocent persons. Nobody's life is safe unless the Commandment "Thou shalt not kill" is observed.

3. Every man has the natural right to property and the use of his lawfully acquired property and to protection by the State of private property against willful interference. Nevertheless, in past years many Church possessions, and especially houses of religious orders, have been taken away by force from their lawful owners and used for other purposes. Even places of worship have been confiscated and desecrated.

We bishops, in the name of the Catholic people, from whom come the members of our orders, protest against this violation of natural property rights and demand the return of the unlawfully confiscated and in many cases sequestered property. We protest against such willful acts for the sake of the common good and as defenders of the fundamental social order willed by God. For what happens today to Church property may tomorrow happen to any lawful property.

4. Every man has the natural rights to the protection of his honor against lies and slander.

On the front and in the homeland faithful Christians fulfill their patriotic duties like all their fellow citizens. Yet Catholic

priests and laymen are suspiciously watched, secretly suspected, nay, publicly branded as traitors and national enemies, just because they stand up for the freedom of the Church and the truth of the Catholic faith.

Catholics of the religious orders have fulfilled their duty heroically in the field, at home and in war, a fact which has been frequently acknowledged through the bestowing of war decorations. In spite of this, many have been deprived of their monastic homes.

We bishops protest against such violations of truth and justice and demand effective, honorable protection for all citizens, including faithful Catholics and members of Catholic orders.

For months, regardless of war misery, an anti-Christian wave of propaganda, fostered by party meetings and party pamphlets, has been carried through the country with the clearly noticeable, even outspoken aim to suffocate the vigor of the Catholic Church in German lands.

If possible, they wish to destroy Christianity in Germany during the war, before the soldiers, whose Christian faith gives them the strength for heroic battles and sacrifices, return home. The vast majority of the German people, whose deepest feelings are hurt by such attacks on Christianity, justly expect the immediate and frank rectification by the Reich government of the unjust oppression and hated struggle against Christianity and the Church.

Dear Diocesans: We bishops have informed you of our grave worries and ardent endeavor for inner peace in our German nation. We call upon you, with the devotion we have always shown you, to support our efforts through your prayer and your unshakable faith, and to repulse decisively and vigorously all attempts to make you waver.

We wish to prove through our attitude that we long for nothing but internal peace, and esteem nothing as highly and faithfully, as our sacred creed, which we shall defend against all attacks. Decisively and firmly we refuse the suggestion that we should prove our patriotic faith through faithlessness toward Christ and our Church.

We remain eternally true to our Fatherland just because, and at any price, we remain faithful to our Saviour and our Church.

God bless our country and our Holy Church. God give an honest, happy, lasting peace to the Church and the Fatherland.

THE GERMAN BISHOPS.

For the Diocese of Wuerzburg:

Matthias, Bishop of Wuerzburg.

Wuerzburg, March 22, 1942.

The above pastoral letter is to be read in all churches during the services on Passion Sunday, March 22, 1942.

Responsible for distribution and edition:

The Bishop of Wuerzburg,  
Matthias Ehrenfried.

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